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## Editorial

THE following symposium pertains to John Wesley and the Methodists but it concerns all Christians. The ecumenical movement has brought it about that individual churches and denominational families have begun to examine anew their origins and traditions in order to determine what special contributions they can now make to the total witness of our day.

In this current process of self-appraisal the Methodists, third largest Protestant family, have been taking a vigorous part. The present conversation is analogous to that which engaged the Reformers in the sixteenth century and which has continued, especially among the followers of Luther, down to our generation. In fact, this discussion of neo-Wesleyanism is clearly involved in the Reformation doctrine of justification.

When the Roman Catholics gathered at Trent in 1545 to try to repair the damage that the Protestant movement had wrought on the monolithic church structure of the West, they leveled their heaviest guns against that "unheard-of doctrine of justification by faith alone." This proved them good theologians but poor historians; the Reformers felt that they were simply clarifying and applying to their own times the central religious experience of the earliest Christian witnesses. Although the doctrine had often been overshadowed or driven underground by the flamboyant semi-Pelagianism of the official Roman Church, it had never been completely discarded and it emerged in the sixteenth century as the catalyst of the entire theological system.

It was to be expected that in any general Protestant theological renaissance, Methodists would be among the first to engage in vigorous discussion of this doctrine of justification and its bearing upon other Christian doctrines, especially that of sanctification. This was to be expected both in view of Wesley's personal experience based largely on Luther's teaching and in view of the historical origins of Wesleyanism as a separate group of modern Protestants. It was also to be expected that when the Methodists got set to discuss the problem, they would not be content with mere theological reprimand but in the spirit of Wesley would look forward to something "neo."

The present symposium presents some new points of view, new facets to the problem, and should stimulate wider participation in the conversation. It will help to make clear the distinctive contributions that Methodists can make to the total impact of Protestant Christianity. It will also make it clear that we need more precise and more generally accepted definition of terms. Above all, it will help to show that the different points of view can never be fully reconciled in a world of only three dimensions and that such differences can enrich rather than cripple the Christian fellowship that is the modern ecumenical movement.

A. R. W.

# Is There a Neo-Wesleyanism?

## I. "What God Hath Joined Together"

PAUL S. SANDERS

IF IT IS TOO EARLY to speak of a neo-Wesleyanism, there are nevertheless clear signs of renewed interest in John Wesley's thought and work. Motivated neither by antiquarian curiosity nor by a search for infallible authority, it is doubtless one aspect of Protestantism's current concern for rediscovering the dynamics of its historical roots. It is partly an outgrowth of the ecumenical movement. Forced to assess their own tradition in order to carry on intelligent conversation, Methodists have begun asking what their distinctive contribution may be.

The effort is also part of a wider Protestant theological renaissance characterized by a recovery of biblical theology, a renewed sense of the church, and an increasingly thoughtful liturgical revival. Nor is all this a retreat from the modern world; rather is it an attempt to relate such insights as may be learned from the study of the past to man's understanding of himself and his world. Honest Christians are not apologetic about the necessity of free inquiry; neither are they willing to allow that their sincerity is to be measured by the degree of their dissent from historic Christianity.

Perhaps we may say that Protestants are seeking a sense of the Catholicity<sup>1</sup> of Christian faith and life, a wholeness rooted in the divine initiative, standing under the divine judgment, and awaiting the divine consummation, encompassing meanwhile a variety of human responses. Just here is implied an unending task of the church: to maintain the authenticity of the "faith once delivered" and at the same time to "deliver" it relevantly in each generation and to the next. The church cannot escape the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Catholicity of Protestantism*, ed. R. N. Flew and R. E. Davies, London: Lutterworth Press, 1950.

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question of *tradition*;<sup>2</sup> it can only deal with it more or less honestly, more or less meaningfully.

Unquestionably there is a Wesleyan-Methodist tradition. Two questions must be put. Does its present form accurately reflect Wesley? Does it adequately represent authentic Christianity?

## I

It is a truism that Wesley stands at the head of a stream of modern influence, centered perhaps in Methodism, but overflowing into other Protestant groups, creating trends and reinforcing others already present, which directed not only modern religion but culture generally toward emphasis on individualism and empiricism. Thus A. C. McGiffert could write:

[Methodism] put an end to the barren rationalism of the eighteenth century; it substituted immediate experience for ratiocination, direct knowledge for indirect, in the religious sphere. . . ; it brought the feelings once more into repute, and aided the nineteenth-century reaction against the narrow intellectualism of the eighteenth; it gave a new meaning and an independent value to religion; it promoted individualism and emancipation from the bondage of ecclesiasticism. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Father Piette, a sympathetic (if not always reliable) interpreter of Wesley, was confident that Methodism had proved the most characteristic movement in Protestant history. The late W. W. Sweet did not hesitate to label Methodism the typical American denomination. But to say so, is that to praise Wesley or to damn him?

Doubtless the average Methodist intends praise when he cites Wesley's authority for religious theories and activities, regardless of their origin, which he intends to pursue in any case. Adherents of philosophies of religious empiricism doubtless intend praise when they include Wesley in company with Schleiermacher, James, and perhaps even Dewey. There are others, accepting the same common portrait of Wesley, who can find but few words for the man apparently responsible for the long decline of genuine Evangelicalism. "We're all Methodists now," complained an Episcopalian expounding Karl Barth!<sup>4</sup>

But how far is all this true of Wesley's own position? How far was he, or Methodism, influential in creating modern Protestantism? Not least, in what degree is modern Protestantism authentic Christianity?

It is customary to begin discussions of this kind by acknowledging that "of course, Wesley was no great theologian." He shows his own

<sup>2</sup> Lat. *traditio*, Gr. *paradosis*; in each case from roots meaning "to hand over, transmit."

<sup>3</sup> *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, Charles Scribner's Sons, reprinted 1949, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in U. Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, Nashville: Cokebury Press, 1936.

estimation of his calling by so frequently refraining from speculation on this or that subject, as being "more curious than useful." Yet a cursory survey of his writings will show them to be doctrinal to the core. There is about them what Vulliamy called a "noble monotony." But in this Wesley only reflects one of his mentors, Jeremy Taylor, who insisted that men should not "make more necessities than God made, which indeed are not many."<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Loofs once replied to an American student, half-apologetic about Wesley's theological ability: "But he had a certain tact, so he hit upon the right thing."<sup>6</sup> If his doctrine was not original, it was designedly thus; it was simply the "plain old religion of the Church of England," smelted in the furnace of a long life of exceedingly varied experience.

This furnishes a clue to the nature of Wesley's thought: it was most characteristically Anglican, and like that, a blend of old truths realized in actual experience. It was, in short, synthetic. Not in the popular sense of a substitute for the real thing! Not synthetic, either, in the sense of Hegelian dialectic, for in Wesley's view reason is one of several means to truth needing synthesizing. And, though he leaves himself open to the charge, not merely eclectic; if he had only jumbled together without principles of order various oddments gleaned from his wide-ranging explorations, his thought would be without lasting significance.

Wesley was synthetic in the same spirit in which classical Anglicanism conceived itself so. It was the aim of seventeenth-century Anglicanism—in some large measure achieved—to incorporate the evangelical insights rediscovered by the Reformation into the Catholic heritage of Christendom, purifying it of accretions and distortions.

This was no sterile compromise between seemingly more vital positions but rather, as Paul Elmer More has said, a conscious choice of direction, distinguishing the fundamentals, which are few, and insisting upon them, and leaving the accessories a matter of expediency.<sup>7</sup> It rejected the infallible authority of the bare word of Scripture, and equally that of its interpretation by popes, councils, theological doctors, or private individuals. Yet it found in the Scriptural record of God's redemptive activity, interpreted within the church, explicated by reason, and verified in experience, a sufficient guide to "all things necessary to salvation."

By this wedding of Catholic and Evangelical insights into a never-

<sup>5</sup> Cited in P. E. More's introductory essay, "The Spirit of Anglicanism," *Anglicanism*, ed. P. E. More and F. L. Cross. Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1935.

<sup>6</sup> I owe this reference to the Rev. John R. Van Pelt.

<sup>7</sup> More, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

finished, not necessarily logically consistent, but nevertheless experientially verifiable complex, Wesley's predecessors had set the tone of Anglican thought. They exerted deliberate effort at holding together in creative tension emphasis upon God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, upon the Word proclaimed in preaching and in sacrament, upon the corporate fellowship and the individual believer, upon revelation and reason, grace and nature, Scripture and tradition, authority and experience.

Judging that he differed in no essential from the spirit of men like Hooker, Andrewes, or Herbert, Wesley must have felt at home with the following sentiment of John Selden,<sup>8</sup> written in the seventeenth century:

It was an unhappy division that has been made betwixt faith and works—though in my intellect I may divide them, just as in the candle I know there is both heat and light. But yet put out the candle, and they are both gone; one remains not without the other. So it is betwixt faith and works.

One example of Wesley's use of the phrase which is our title deals with the same point.<sup>9</sup>

It is then a great blessing given to this people [called Methodists], that as they do not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other. They know, *God has joined these together and it is not for man to put them asunder*: therefore they maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand; and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other: being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic; and of outward, as any Pharisee.

## II

Wesley's understanding of justification centers upon the unmerited grace of God whereby man is forgiven and reconciled. Methodists gladly sang the Calvinist Toplady's lines, "In my hand no price I bring, Simply to thy Cross I cling." Justification is by grace through faith: by taking God at his Word, we find ourselves forgiven. "I think on justification [Wesley wrote] . . . just as Mr. Calvin does. In this respect I do not differ from him an hair's breadth."<sup>10</sup> Insisting that faith is itself the gift of God, not the work of man, Wesley aligns himself with the Reformers. Man is "pardoned and accepted through the alone merits of Christ," he says, awkwardly perhaps, but certainly emphatically.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in More and Cross, *Anglicanism*, p. 301.

<sup>9</sup> Sermon 107. *Works*, VII, 205. (Italics ours.) The 14-volume *Works*, ed. in 1829-31 by T. Jackson, has been recently reprinted from the 1872 edition by Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>10</sup> *Letters*, ed. J. Telford, 8 vols., Epworth Press, 1931, IV, 298; similar expressions elsewhere.

<sup>11</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, Titus 3:5. Cf. Eph. 2:10, and similar comments.

Yet he does differ more than a hair's breadth from both Calvin and Luther. If the faith whereby grace is appropriated is the gift of God, there is no logical way to avoid either a grace-wrought universal salvation or else the unconditional election of some to salvation and others to reprobation. Wesley would have neither. He could not find in Scripture or experience reason to believe that all men are restored. And the teaching of unconditional election he rejected vehemently. He had, in fact, to make room, however "small," for man to cast the deciding vote in the matter of his eternal destiny. That was the root of his Arminianism.

It was a far cry, nevertheless, from contemporary forms of humanism, whether Deism, Anglican latitudinarianism, or Dissenting Arianism. Wesley attributed man's ability to respond to God's offer of grace not to natural free will but to prevenient grace. It is grace "free for all" and working "free in all" that enables man, otherwise dead in sin, to answer God's Word.<sup>12</sup> The logical problem is not thereby resolved, of course. Sometimes Wesley speaks as if man is graciously enabled to co-operate with grace; more frequently perhaps, and more consistently, he speaks as if man is graciously enabled to cease resisting grace. He would press the issue no farther.

He was convinced that no man can be reconciled except by the working of God. He was equally convinced that no man can be reconciled apart from himself (the essential "I") participating therein. How it is that one "I" does so "participate" and another not, he does not know. His doctrine of "gracious ability" is in effect an assertion of the limits of knowledge.

The same has been said of the Reformation doctrine of unconditional election. If so, then either position is finally a confession of faith. All the more important, therefore, to realize that Wesley was led to his "synergism" not by consideration of the status of man's will but by his understanding of the nature of the Christian revelation.

It is in view of the *righteousness* of God that Wesley rejects predestination.<sup>13</sup> This is no vaguely sentimental, moralistic term; it indicates precisely God's *chesed*, his covenant-loyalty. The Scriptures teach us, he says, that God's holiness and his love come to the same thing: his righteousness. His "wrath" equally with his "mercy" (and these are analogues, one as legitimate as the other) is directed toward one end, the restoration of man. God's righteousness is, essentially, his dependability: he cannot

<sup>12</sup> Sermon 128. *Works*, VII, 373-4. This point is developed repeatedly in Wesley's writings.

<sup>13</sup> On God's righteousness, see *Notes*, Rom. 1:17; Rom. 5:9; 1 John 1:9. Cf. J. Lawson, ed., *Selections From John Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament,"* Epworth Press, 1955.

be other than he reveals himself in his redemptive activity, of which the Scriptures are a record and the People of God the peculiar locus.<sup>14</sup>

If the doctrine of predestination be true, the biblical revelation is both unnecessary and contradictory. Unnecessary, because the sacred history has been but a piece of play-acting; Wesley sees that consistent Augustinianism no less than Socinianism reduces the Incarnation to a metaphor. Contradictory, because the "whole scope and tenor of Scripture" represents the purpose of revelation as God's will to draw man unto life in him.

Wesley would protect God's sovereignty by insisting that grace is "all in all"; yet, since grace is "free for all, free in all," it follows that "no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he has."<sup>15</sup> Must we conclude that Wesley is after all responsible for the anthropocentricity of subsequent evangelicalism? Not fairly so. The balance of Wesley's synthesis is delicate, but his own intended emphasis was upon the primacy of grace. As the saintly Fletcher wrote, "I build my faith not on my experience, though this increases it, but upon the revealed truth of God."<sup>16</sup> The source and means of salvation are focused in the Person and work of Christ, mediated by the Spirit through the church.

The work of Christ as man was twofold: perfect obedience to the Law and voluntary endurance of the lot of fallen man, including death.<sup>17</sup> The basis of our justification is the latter of these. Christ the perfect High Priest offers himself the perfect Victim, making a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world." God forgives not for the sake of a Law perfectly obeyed but by means of an expiation perfectly fulfilled.

There can be no justification where man merely works to obey the Law. There can be no justification where man tries to offer Christ's obedience instead of his own. Justification occurs when, resting upon Christ's one oblation, man is enabled to offer himself a sacrifice in union with his. Precisely in renouncing all dependence on merit, in the giving over of self-will, in ceasing to resist the free grace of God, man knows himself accepted and forgiven.

<sup>14</sup> Wesley does not mean that God is not "more" than can be revealed to man, only that he is not different in character from his self-revealed nature. Nor does Wesley mean that God does not reveal himself in other ways and to other peoples than through the Christian revelation. How God works for the redemption of "the Hottentots" is not at the moment under discussion.

<sup>15</sup> Sermon 85. *Works*, VI, 512.

<sup>16</sup> L. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883, p. 412.

<sup>17</sup> See H. Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, Epworth Press, 1950, chap. II, and numerous references to Wesley's writings.

## III

Exactly the same may be said, whether of justification or of sanctification. The Wesleyan emphasis is upon the redemptive work of God, not what I feel or think or do, though to be sure *redemption* involves my personal self. Wesley's insistence on taking holiness more seriously than it seemed to him either Luther or Calvin had done does not, once again, rest on any assumption that man by willing or working can achieve holiness. Who was more acutely aware of the futility of either inward or outward works in setting straight his relation with God? The Law serves to drive man in despair to Christ for justification.

Yet God is unutterably holy and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If in justification we acknowledge all our attempts at righteousness to be unavailing, nevertheless in regeneration God begins in us the work of sanctification. Taking him at his Word, we find ourselves "new creatures," now not only commanded to press on in holiness but enabled in faith so to do. As the Law drives us to Christ, Wesley was fond of saying, Christ drives us to the Law.

Justification is a change in our relation with God. It is not being made righteous, or even declared righteous, except it be immediately annexed to sanctification. God does not judge concerning us "contrary to the real nature of things," nor "esteem us better than we really are. . . . Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am . . . righteous or holy, because Another is so."<sup>18</sup> Wesley rejects, that is, the teaching of imputed righteousness. If we are accepted, through faith, without holiness, it is in order that we may be made holy. Justification and sanctification intend the same end: the restoration of man in the image of God.

Luther's *sola fide* seemed too easily interpreted as meaning *sine operibus* and *extra ecclesiam*. Though he encountered its effects in the antinomianism and disparagement of the means of grace displayed by certain of the Moravians, Wesley thought he discerned the source of the evil in Luther's own teaching. He rejected Luther's view that Christ delivers us from the Law as from sin and death. The Law cannot be abrogated; it is the "express image" of God, the very term used for Christ.<sup>19</sup> It cannot be something from which we are to be delivered unless the end of Christ's work is to deliver us from holiness!

<sup>18</sup> Sermon 5. *Standard Sermons*, ed. E. H. Sugden, 2 vols., Epworth Press, 1921, I, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Sermons 29-31, *Standard Sermons*, Vol. II.

No less than justification, holiness rests upon the Atonement; sanctification is by grace through faith. The perfect obedience of Christ as man is the basis of man's obedience, as Christ's voluntary sacrifice is the basis of man's forgiveness. Christ is our example in holiness, both demanding and eliciting our obedience in love.

God worketh in you [he wrote]; therefore you *can* work: otherwise it would be impossible. . . . God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work. . . . Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis non salvabit nos sine nobis*: "He that made us without ourselves will not save us without ourselves."<sup>20</sup>

Wesley would press the issue no farther. He was convinced no man can be renewed in the image of God unless God do it; he was equally certain that no man is restored except he *himself* be restored. Roman Catholics, he felt, understood well enough the importance of holiness but trusted too much in man, too little in God. Luther had grasped the vital importance of faith but was too content with forgiveness merely, and insufficiently concerned for growth in grace.

Calvin soundly insisted upon both justification and sanctification; but the latter was as fatally flawed by the doctrine of final perseverance as the former by unconditional election. The end result of Calvin's logic Wesley thought he perceived in the scorn heaped upon good works by many Calvinists among his contemporaries, including such an erstwhile colleague as James Hervey.<sup>21</sup>

Achieved righteousness is impossible. Imputed righteousness is misleading. Imparted righteousness is nearer the fact, but it must be understood as including man's own active involvement. Shall we conclude, after all, that Wesley is responsible for the legalistic moralism which came to mark subsequent evangelicalism? Not fairly so. He is perfectly clear: holiness is the gift of grace through faith. "Faith alone it is which effectually answers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For so long as we walk by faith, not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness."<sup>22</sup> But we must go on! God will not save us without ourselves.

#### IV

The synthetic character of Wesley's thought is clear. He tried, not always successfully, to do justice to the several aspects of truth he had

<sup>20</sup> Sermon 85. *Works*, VI, 511, 513.

<sup>21</sup> Wesley considered his struggle with Calvinist antinomians of even more crucial importance than the earlier predestinarian controversy: a man may hold to unconditional election as an opinion and be a Christian still, but a man cannot be a Christian who belittles Christian holiness.

<sup>22</sup> Sermon 31. *Standard Sermons*, II, 80.

learned in the Scriptures, the church, and experience. Salvation is the restoration of fallen man to sonship. It is the will and work of God, but since it is *for man* it must be *in man*, and therefore impossible apart from his "consenting thereto." Salvation is forgiveness and acceptance without prerequisite righteousness, but it is also recreation through the Holy Spirit and so actual growth in righteousness; and neither without the other. It is personal but not merely subjective. It is individual but never separate from the Body of Christ as the realm of the Spirit and the fellowship of saints. It rests upon faith but not apart from works; it results in works but not unsupported by faith. Salvation is by both faith and works; or better, *by grace through faith working in love*.

Just here Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection appears as the attempted synthesis of justification and sanctification. The main objections to that teaching appear to be two. Because he does not mean a state of sinlessness beyond which growth is not needed or possible, Wesley seems to put himself in the ridiculous position of saying that Christian perfection is rather less than perfection! Because he does mean the present consciousness of no known enmity between self and God, and hence between self and fellows, Wesley seems to risk the ultimate presumption, as well as taking too lightly the ignorance of oneself remaining despite faith's illumination.

As W. E. Sangster<sup>28</sup> has suggested, in the first instance Wesley intends to say something about man: that his changed relation to God is moment by moment sufficient to salvation, provided he be always going on in grace; yet it is never "as though [he] had attained." In the second instance Wesley is saying something about God: that he whose love has been thus far effective may surely be trusted to enable one to root out all conscious sin, "otherwise the promise of God would be a mere mockery of human weakness."

Wesley thought he stood on solid Scriptural ground, for do not the demand and promise of God come to the same thing? One may sincerely cry:

Every moment, Lord, I need  
The merit of Thy death.

He may just as sincerely exclaim:

Everlasting life is won,  
Glory is on earth begun.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Path to Perfection*, The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943, esp. chap. XI.

Had he lived now Wesley might have availed himself of that blessed word *eschatological*!

He tried to maintain a working synthesis of the Protestant stress on the sovereignty of grace and the Catholic stress on the necessity and possibility of being conformed thereto. That his synthesis fell apart was due to a number of factors which the historian may investigate; but the existence of our fragmented "churches" testifies to the difficulty of the task.

If the use of the terms Evangelical and Catholic are justified to denote separate, characteristic stresses within Christian faith and life, then Wesley would have us understand that neither is complete without the other, and that the nearest approach to the wholeness of the faith, the church of the first three centuries, would not have understood either their distinction or their opposition. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

## 2. Plenteous Grace With Thee Is Found

W. D. ALLBECK

IT IS HEARTENING to observe that Methodists are becoming concerned to diagram their own tradition, particularly as it is rooted in the theology of John Wesley. Paul Sanders' article is indicative of the trend. *The Theology of John Wesley* by William P. Cannon, published in 1946, is well known. The appearance this year of *John Wesley's Theology Today* by Colin W. Williams, with its impressive bibliography, indicates continuing interest. Of great importance is the recent republication of Wesley's works.

Recent developments in Christian history have focused new attention on the problem of "tradition." Protestant suspicion of the word as subversive has subsided to the degree that the World Council of Churches has set up a Commission on Tradition and Traditions. If the word is understood to mean the continuing expression of the gospel in the thought and life of the churches, there most certainly is a living tradition, even a Wesleyan one. "Protestantism needs to see with a new clarity that the Church lives always in the dimension of tradition."<sup>1</sup>

Under the influence of the ecumenical movement an analysis of tradition is bound to be made in the areas of theology in general, in the doctrines of the church, the ministry and the sacraments, and of worship. It is in these areas that Methodism is often considered to be weak. If Wilhelm Pauck is correct in saying that "the temper of contemporaneous Protestantism is characterized by the predominance of theological questions,"<sup>2</sup> Methodism may be expected to be involved to its own benefit, especially as it finds its heritage in the Protestant Reformation instead of in the American way of life.

In view of the fact that there has been a Luther renaissance as well as a revived study of Calvin, we may anticipate that insights gained therefrom will be utilized in evaluating neo-Wesleyanism. The results of recent Luther and Calvin studies, which indicate the need for considerable revision

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<sup>1</sup> Jenkins, Daniel, *Tradition, Freedom and the Spirit*, The Westminster Press, 1952, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Pauck, Wilhelm, *The Heritage of the Reformation*, The Beacon Press, 1950, p. 231.

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of the older interpretation, also should suggest approaches for the restudy of Wesley. In this connection attention certainly will be paid to the studies of Luther by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson.

It is Watson who points to the instances in which Wesley misunderstood Luther, either because he depended upon inadequate interpreters of Luther or because he had not read Luther's works with sufficient care. Wesley accused Luther of hostility to all use of reason, of mysticism, of rejection of the law, and of ignorance of the doctrine of sanctification. Watson suggests that Wesley, reading Luther's *Galatians* while on a journey from Nottingham to London, had time to read only sketchily, or perhaps did not get as far as Chapter Five.<sup>3</sup>

## I

Sanders makes much of the fact that Wesley was an Anglican. But any study of Wesley should be structured by the fact that he was staunchly an evangelical Anglican. Whether he learned this, as he affirmed, from the Church of England, or had it impressed upon him by the Moravians, or developed it out of the compulsions of preaching, is incidental. The fact remains that this was fundamental for him. Writing to Dr. Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, he said:

You say, eighthly: "Mr. Wesley affirms that the condition of our justification is faith alone, and not good works." Most certainly I do. And I learned it from the Eleventh and Twelfth Articles and from the Homilies of our Church. If you can confute them, do. But I subscribe to them both with my hand and heart.<sup>4</sup>

Soteriology was the chief area of conflict for the Reformation; it was so also for Wesley. It was not simply the demands of his own experience or of his preaching that made it so. He steadily heard the authoritative voice of Scripture. When it is said, "It must be borne in mind that Wesley was a preacher, and not a philosopher or a systematic theologian,"<sup>5</sup> there is a serious underestimating of him as an interpreter of Scripture. The point at which Scripture spoke both to him in his spiritual uncertainty and to his age in its religious complacency was that of salvation.

Inasmuch as the Church of Rome by its error at this point had distorted much of Christian doctrine, the Protestant Reformation made an evangelical doctrine of justification its major concern. Until it became clear that this was the decisive issue, efforts at reform were so much patch-

<sup>3</sup> Watson, Philip S., *Let God Be God!* Muhlenberg Press, 1949, pp. 3f., 86, 101, 153, 171, 180, 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters* (Telford), III, 321.

<sup>5</sup> Prince, John W., *Wesley on Religious Education*, Abingdon Press, 1926, p. 11.

work. Once this was understood it was possible to reconstruct the whole theological fabric in its terms. This was more than reducing doctrine to a few fundamentals, as Sanders quotes P. E. More as saying. Such a statement neglects the dynamic relation of doctrines. In a sense the first four articles of the Augsburg Confession (on God, sin, Christ, and justification) are fundamental. But they give color and tone to all the other articles whatever their themes. Inasmuch as the works-of-merit concept of the Romanists and the freely-justified doctrine of the Gospel are antithetical, no wedding of evangelical and Roman Catholic views is possible. This Wesley understood clearly. He scorned such a misalliance.

It is doubtful, therefore, whether an investigation of Wesley's theology in a *gestalt* of synthesis can be fruitful. Cannon's conclusion, it will be remembered, was that Wesley's Aldersgate experience was a rupture of the Anglican synthesis in which holiness had subtly become an aspect of justification. Wesley escaped the shallowness of the Anglican synthesis, though he failed to reach the boldness of Luther's paradox.

On the other hand, if the Wesleyan emphasis was upon faith active in good works, this is so thoroughly typical of Reformation theology that to designate it a synthesis of Protestant and Catholic positions constitutes a basic misunderstanding of the situation. Has it been forgotten that Luther attacked the antinomian views of Agricola, or that the faith of the Moravians displayed itself fruitfully in outstanding missionary work? It was not that the Reformers disparaged works while the Romanists urged them. The difference was over the Romanist claim that works are meritorious and that good works consist of vows, pilgrimages, fastings, etc. Between service to others performed by Christian love, and canonical abstinence from meat on Friday, there can be no synthesis. And Wesley did not attempt it.

## II

Wesley was an evangelical in his understanding of justification, as Sanders correctly affirms. Since that doctrine had faded in importance in the Church of England Wesley was eager to re-establish its vitalizing significance. Otherwise the meaning of the rise of the Methodist movement is theologically obscured. That is why it is doubtful that "the synthetic character of Wesley's thought is clear." The question rather is whether his exposition of justification by faith is in any way cloudy.

When the Reformation had won its victory at this locus it was understandably sensitive to any weakening of its position on justification *propter Christum per fidem*. Synergism was considered such a weakening. There-

fore the problem of synergism in Wesley's theology deserves restudy. Perhaps it is true that "Wesleyan thought is decidedly synergistic in its description of the operations prior to justification and essential to the bestowal of saving faith," as Cannon says.<sup>6</sup>

This much is certain: Wesley had no place for works of merit. Sanders is quite correct in saying that his was an "emphasis on the primacy of grace." Wesley had no doubt but that we are saved for Christ's sake alone. His brother, Charles, expressed their common faith when he wrote the familiar words, "Plenteous grace with Thee is found." Here is certainly a Christocentric viewpoint, and from it Wesley developed his famous triple concern with sin, justification, and holiness.

As for the idea of imputation, it is not correct to say that Wesley was opposed, except to the view that the righteousness of Christ is mechanically imputed to those who do not repent and believe.<sup>7</sup> He affirmed in Sermon 49 that "to all believers the righteousness of Christ is imputed."<sup>8</sup> It is also possible to quote Wesley in favor of the merits of Christ resting on his active and passive obedience. When James Harvey wrote that Christ's "universal obedience from His birth to His death is the one foundation of my hope," Wesley answered, "This is unquestionably right."<sup>9</sup> In Sermon 49 cited above he said, "The active and passive righteousness of Christ were never, in fact, separated from each other."<sup>10</sup> Harald Lindström's statement is, "Though Wesley can include both the active and the passive obedience of Christ in the work of atonement, the stress nevertheless lies on the latter."<sup>11</sup>

### III

So John Wesley was an Arminian! To say so implies that he moved in a Calvinist, rather than a Lutheran, atmosphere. It was therefore with the problems confronting Calvinism that the Arminian party—and Wesley—were concerned. These issues were those made acute by the high Calvinists who in a sense out-Calvined Calvin, just as orthodoxy went beyond Luther.

Perhaps if it had not been for Bolsec's controversy Calvin would not have been pressed to explicate in such detail his views on predestination

<sup>6</sup> Cannon, William P., *The Theology of John Wesley*, The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946, p. 115. A somewhat different interpretation is given in Williams, Colin W., *John Wesley's Theology Today*, Abingdon Press, 1960, pp. 72f.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, III, 249.

<sup>8</sup> *Standard Sermons*, II, 428. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 70f., by quoting out of context makes this mistake.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters*, III, 372.

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Lindström, Harald, *Wesley and Sanctification*, Epworth Press, 1950 (Uppsala, 1946), p. 72.

and election. "The first edition of the *Institutes* contains no special section on the question of divine predestination."<sup>12</sup> He might have been content to affirm that the problem of why some are saved and others are not is a mystery. If so, Wesley would have been in his party when he "would press the issue no farther." Had Wesley been in the Lutheran orbit instead of the Arminian-Calvinist one, he might have been satisfied with a Christocentric approach, and been spared his strictures on predestination. Even so, there is less of speculation and more of Christ in Calvin's doctrine than Methodists recognize. Calvin said that eagerness to know the mysteries of God in this matter "is a species of madness."<sup>13</sup>

Wesley's sympathy with the Arminian party in Calvinism committed him to understanding the process of salvation to a degree, at least, from man's side. A solution of the mystery of election was to be sought, not exclusively in God, but to a degree in man. Carried far enough it makes something in man a factor in election, and becomes to that degree synergistic. Developed in this fashion theology easily turns into a psychology of religious experience.

It is not necessary to be Arminian to understand that God deals with us as persons, not as puppets. Calvin when taken in the full thrust of his theology does not consider men as blocks. The Lutheran Formula of Concord affirms that "God does not force man to become godly . . . yet God the Lord draws the man whom He wishes to convert."<sup>14</sup> The monergism of grace does not imply that individuals as the objects of grace cease to be fully human beings.

Arminianism confronted Calvinism with the logical dilemma of "either a grace-wrought universal salvation or else the unconditional election of some." Philip Schaff thought that the treatment of predestination in the Lutheran Formula of Concord involved "an obvious and irreconcilable antagonism" between *sola gratia* and *gratia universalis*. In his judgment, "the Lutheran system, to be consistent, must rectify itself, and develop either . . . in the direction of Augustinianism and Calvinism, or . . . in the direction of synergism and Arminianism."<sup>15</sup> The difficulty lies in Calvin's "pitiless logic," to use the phrase of J. S. Whale.<sup>16</sup> Lutheran theology paradoxically embraces both *sola gratia* and *gratia universalis*, since both

<sup>12</sup> Niesel, Wilhelm, *The Theology of Calvin*, The Westminster Press, 1956, p. 165.

<sup>13</sup> *Institutes*, III, 23, 8. Niesel in showing the Christ-centered nature of Calvin's discussion quotes *Institutes*, III, 24, 5, a section that Cannon conveniently omits, pp. 91 f.

<sup>14</sup> *Book of Concord*, edited by H. E. Jacobs, Philadelphia, 1883, I, 564.

<sup>15</sup> Schaff, Philip, *Creeds of Christendom*, New York, 1899, I, 314 f.

<sup>16</sup> Whale, J. S., *The Protestant Heritage*, Cambridge University Press, 1955, pp. 142 f.

are taught in Scripture without a feeling of contradiction. Even Schaff concluded that "the human mind has not been able as yet satisfactorily to set forth the harmony of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility."<sup>17</sup>

As Sanders quite justly observes, Wesley understood well enough that salvation is the work of God, the effect and application of the deed of Christ. "Plenteous grace" is "with Thee." Probably if predestination and election had been limited by Calvin to that, the words would not have been so offensive to Wesley. That he solved the problem by "breaking the pattern of logical necessity" is the interpretation of Williams.<sup>18</sup> Logic aside, it is enough to observe from Scripture that salvation is God's long-planned gift made available by the work of Christ and received through faith. Predestination limited to these terms is biblical and would accord, as Sanders observes, with Wesley's understanding of the nature of Christian revelation."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Schaff, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> See the survey of interpretations of Wesley in the Introduction of Lindström's work, particularly p. 13.

### 3. Is There a Neo-Wesleyanism?

PERCY SCOTT

#### I

ONE OF THE MOST unexpected results of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century is the reassertion of confessionalism. When the representatives of the conferring churches have come together, they have been driven to enquire concerning their own special contribution to the fullness of the faith. In some instances the need to express a particular emphasis in terms which take account of other traditions and are intelligible to their representatives has led to a discovery of agreement where disagreement had been thought to exist, as Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic are found to meet, for example, in C. F. D. Moule's *The Sacrifice of Christ*. In other cases, as for example the discussions between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England with regard to episcopacy, something approaching stalemate appears to have been reached.

It is encouraging in such circumstances to recall the words of the Amsterdam Conference that having come together we mean to stay together. But this is much more easily said than done. When every denomination is zealously examining its own tradition it is inevitable that old loyalties and passions will be aroused, with the result that some people will lose courage and will find their satisfaction in guarding the confessional deposit. When this happens the last state may be worse than the first. This kind of observation raises the question: how far can the past be normative for the present in Christian theology, and how far should it be? Would it not be better to look to the future rather than to the past? These questions are of cardinal importance, and we must try to answer them.

The Christian religion claims to be based on divine revelation, and the substance of that revelation was given in the past. It is bound up with the history of Israel and the fullness of time in which God sent forth a Son. The Christian believes that the Christ-event was something unique—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and though he

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has worked in and through many other men and women there has never been another who could be the God-man in the sense that Jesus was. Because of who he was, Jesus Christ was able to make atonement for the sin of the world—to bring Holy God and sinful man together. The significance of Jesus is declared in his resurrection from the dead. Christian preaching from the beginning has included a recounting of the life and teaching of Jesus and of his death, resurrection, and ascension. Without this basic message there is no Christianity. Now if this is correct, as we are persuaded it is, it follows as the night the day that there can never be a Christian theology which is not based primarily on these events, and that means that to a considerable degree the norm is in the past. It is in the basic events centering on Jesus Christ.

Of course it must be granted that the events were reported by men who already had the beginnings of theology. It is impossible to get back to event without interpretation, but at least New Testament writers were very close to the events, and many of their accounts were written during the lifetime of witnesses of these events. Christian preaching consists in preaching and explicating the message and events focused in Jesus of Nazareth.

Not only were the New Testament writings themselves, however, expressions of a theology, but there have also developed traditional ways of interpreting these accounts and their implications. The traditional Protestant interpretation of Matthew 16:18, for example, is different from the "Catholic" interpretation, and that, in turn, is different from that of the Fathers (which, incidentally, is closer to the Protestants). Furthermore each tradition has developed characteristics of its own. The Roman Church acknowledges seven Sacraments (the medieval Church at one time recognized many more). Most of the Protestant churches acknowledge only two. On matters of this kind tradition cannot be normative, if we recognize that there are many traditions within the fullness of the Church. What is called for here is the most objective study of the traditions with special regard to their consonance or dissonance with the Scriptures, in particular with the New Testament, and to be more particular still, with what we know of the mind of Christ and also with reason and experience.

It must be recognized that there are also new situations which the writers of Holy Scripture did not envisage, in addition to some matters on which they speak with two voices. How, for example, shall the question about the legitimacy of divorce be answered? Shall Mark be followed (it is always wrong), or Matthew (it is admissible on the ground of

adultery); and may not the question be raised concerning the admissibility on other grounds? On such a question Scripture and tradition must clearly be considered, but it may well be that reason in the light of more evidence than has been available in former ages may lead to new conclusions. In such matters Tillich's distinction between "original" and "dependent" revelations appears appropriate and necessary. It is possible that a similar line of argument might apply to the question of Episcopacy.

The same sort of test must be applied to questions posed in our age for the first time in any serious way—for example, the practice of vivisection, the use of contraceptives, artificial insemination, and the like. It is difficult to see how Scripture could be asked to answer questions never envisaged when it was written—or the tradition, which likewise was firmly established before these specific questions were asked. It must be recognized that tradition is still in the making, and many factors, including reason, evidence, and experience, contribute to it.

This means that the specific confessions of the churches must likewise be frequently under reconsideration. As Schleiermacher said, the church must constantly be in a state of reformation. Again and again churches have found it necessary to modify their confessions. The Church of Scotland, for example, has adopted modifications of the Westminster Confession, and it is notorious that many Anglicans treat the Thirty-Nine Articles with contempt. Confessions bear the mark of their own time, and frequently express a disproportion which is later recognized to be intolerable.

There are theologians, of course, who would treat both Scripture and tradition in cavalier fashion. They wish to emancipate Christianity from its historical roots and make it a religion of general truths incorporating the best in all faiths; but though the intention may be commendable, the result is disastrous. Christianity is not a system of general truths, a sort of philosophy of religion. It is witness to, and life derived from, the Christ-events in history. It is a very good thing that theologians should seek to speak to all sorts and conditions of men in their own age; the task of reinterpreting and of answering current questions is always bracing for a theologian, but if he thinks within the context of the Christian revelation he is committed to accepting the scandal of history.

Now in the light of all this, what may we say about a neo-Wesleyanism? First of all, is there such a thing, and secondly, is it to be desired?

There can be little doubt, I think, that in the last thirty years or so there has been a growing interest in the message and work of the Wesleys, both in Great Britain and in the U.S.A., and indeed elsewhere. One has

only to think of such names as G. C. Cell, J. E. Rattenbury, M. Piette, H. Bett, B. L. Manning, H. Lindström, U. Lee, M. L. Edwards, E. W. Sangster, M. Schmidt, W. R. Cannon, F. Hildebrandt, E. W. Thompson, E. W. Baker, and the latest, Colin Williams, to realize what a great deal of attention has been given in recent years, by non-Methodists as well as Methodists, to the significance of the Wesleys. Some of these authors have been chiefly concerned with historical studies, but all have also had in mind the significance of the message of the Wesleys for the church today.

But though these many works indicate a keen interest in the subject, they do not in themselves justify speaking of a neo-Wesleyanism. In fact there does not appear to be anything in Methodism comparable with the resuscitation of Luther and Calvin. No one is trying to make Wesley the standard for Methodist teaching and preaching, in the sense of paying scant regard to representatives of other traditions and showing a firm determination to prove that the Methodists are right and all others wrong. This would be entirely contrary to the major mood of Methodism throughout the world, for Wesley's sermon on "The Catholic spirit" expresses admirably what Methodists feel about themselves and about other Christians. If we re-examine our origins it is not with the intention of asserting ourselves afresh as a distinct denomination, but rather to make sure that in uniting with other churches (a matter on which we have a most commendable record) we not only refrain from abandoning anything that has proved of value in our tradition, but we also make the positive contribution which our tradition contains.

## II

What, then, can be said about a return to the Wesleys? Probably the most striking feature in British Methodism is the revival of interest in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Since this is a feature of Free Church life in Great Britain, however, it could be argued that it is a product of a movement much wider than Methodism, and is not a direct result of a return to the Wesleys. Yet there can be no doubt that those who have led the movement in Methodism have constantly appealed to the teaching and practice of the Wesleys. Foremost among them has been J. E. Rattenbury, whose book, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, is a major contribution. Rattenbury set himself to restore the earlier balance between Word and Sacrament, and it would hardly be too much to say that the balance is well on the way to being restored. The practice of a fortnightly communion is now not at all uncommon, and early celebrations are increasingly frequent. A recent edition of the *London Quarterly* (April,

1959) which was devoted to a study of the Eucharist in present-day Methodism was widely welcomed. On the whole it would probably be correct to say that the movement finds stronger support among the younger ministers than the older.

Because of his major emphasis on conversion as an experience of a person old enough to make decisions for himself, it is understandable that Wesley did not emphasize the sacrament of Baptism. He believed in and practised infant baptism, but it was never prominent in his teaching. The great spread of interest in this sacrament could not then be in any way regarded as a return to Wesley, but it does call to be noticed as a feature of Methodist life today, and, again, it is part of a movement much wider than Methodism.

Along with this sacramental revival there is going on a renewed interest in the doctrine of the ministry. Wesley was much more rigid in this matter than his successors have been. In his sermon on "The Ministerial Office," he says with regard to lay preachers:

We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer sacraments. And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as Christian Church. Neither the Romish, nor the English, nor the Presbyterian Churches ever accounted them so. Otherwise we should never have accepted the service, either of Mr. Maxfield. . . .

In 1744 all the Methodist Preachers had their first Conference. But none of them dreamed that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. . . . Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments; to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered our mind; it was farthest from our thoughts: and if any preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connection.<sup>1</sup>

Now it would be wrong to give the impression that this is the position taken in Methodism today. Those who broke away from the parent body had a very different conception from Wesley's of what constituted the ministry, and we are at present in the process of rethinking the meaning of ordination and the partnership between ordained ministry and laity. There is a wide renewal of interest in the scope of the ministry of the laity, but this also is much wider than Methodism; in fact it is as wide as the Christian Church.

A feature of the Methodism of today which is without any question a return to Wesley is the revival of interest in the Wesleys' hymns. The liberal era with its attenuated theology had a serious effect on the message

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, London, 1872. Vol. VII, Sermon 115, p. 277.

proclaimed from Methodist pulpits. To a considerable extent it became anthropocentric, whereas the emphasis of the Wesleys was Christocentric. This defection appears to be a feature of Methodism generally, and the awareness of it is probably at the back of British complaints that far too few of the hymns of the Wesleys are sung in the United States. At least the hymns are a reminder of what the message was which made Methodism such a powerful force in the eighteenth century, and the rediscovery of the basic message of the Reformation is likely to lead to a revival of interest in the hymns of the Wesleys far beyond the country of their origin.

There is little room for doubt that as the Book of Common Prayer has preserved the Church of England from seriously missing her way theologically, the same service has been performed in British Methodism by the Hymn Book. We have never ceased to sing the Wesley hymns. These have been a constant reminder to us of what the beliefs were which lay behind the evangelical revival, and a reminder too that insofar as they were not readily intelligible to us we were setting forth a message very different from that which brought us into being.

It is perhaps worth while in this connection to ask what differences John Wesley would find between the message and objectives of the Methodists in his day and ours. He would almost certainly notice that far less is said about sin and the law. The same applies to the doctrine of assurance and perfect love. He would find much more about humanitarianism and much less about redemption through Jesus Christ. He would find the Methodists busy with all sorts of good works, but few of them practising personal evangelism with any sort of seriousness. He would recognize that Methodists are taking seriously the call to serve the present age, but he would have to ask whether they were serving in the strength of the Holy Spirit or their own strength, and whether they were actually concerned about the things he regarded as most important.

Perhaps it should be added that in some quarters an attempt is being made to recover the message of the Wesleys, but unfortunately those making it are repeating the language of the fathers rather than translating it into modern idiom. Their outlook savors more of reaction and nostalgia than of a clarion call to men and women in the twentieth century, and one has therefore serious doubts about it. There can be no doubt, however, that many of the younger ministers are deeply involved in this "return" and among them are some outstanding men. They are eminently serious, and their work is likely to contribute to a deepening of the spiritual life of the church. They emphasize the traditional doctrine as well as speak the tradi-

tional language, and they are rather critical of their "modern" brethren. It scarcely needs to be said that this trend is also much wider than Methodism.

### III

Finally, to turn to the specific matters raised in the basic article by Paul S. Sanders. It is plain from what has been said above that his statement about a catholic and liturgical revival is correct. It should also be noted that few Methodist theologians would lay the emphasis on religious experience which former generations did. Several writers, including Eric Baker and Colin Williams, have argued that Methodists should not admit the charge that Wesley was no theologian. They maintain on the contrary that his theology was sound and commendable, and in many ways creative, though there is certainly much of Hooker and Jeremy Taylor in it. We agree with Sanders that Wesley's writings are "doctrinal to the core."

It is quite evident that Wesley's interests centered on practical religion and therefore on the doctrine of salvation, its ground in the redeeming acts of God in Christ, and its operations in the heart of man. What Sanders has to say about Wesley's criticisms of the doctrine of predestination and his own emphasis on the "yes" or "no" of man as the final factor, is beyond dispute. For all his stress on the objective acts of God in Christ, Wesley held that man can withstand the preventer grace of God, and so refuse the benefits of salvation.

It would be a mistake, however, to allow Wesley's frequent criticisms of Calvin's doctrine of predestination (which incidentally is in close agreement with that of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas) to encourage the view that he was wholly out of sympathy with Calvin. There is very good reason to believe that he was indebted to Calvin at many points, though apparently he read Calvin mostly in the works of his followers.

On the doctrine of Original Sin, on which Wesley wrote a major treatise, they spoke with one voice. The same applies to their insistence on justification through faith alone, and on this as directly based upon the righteousness of Christ. They differed in their interpretation of justification in that Calvin, following Luther, held that justification is repeated on every confession of sin, whereas Wesley taught that there is a state of justification. He normally spoke of justification as something which happened in the past. It may be that he was wrong at this point—that God does justify the believer again and again; but in that case Wesley's concern that the new birth introduces a man into a new relationship with God in which he may experience the blessedness of sonship would need to be expressed

in some other way. Both the Lutheran and the Calvinist doctrines are inadequate at this point.

Certain it is that Wesley's teaching on the new birth deserves more attention than Sanders gives it, though we must admit that it is not so prominent in current Methodism as it was in Wesley's day. Perhaps this is inevitable where the preaching is for the most part addressed to a community brought up within the church. If we were preaching to people who had scarcely ever heard of Christ, our emphasis would doubtless be different.

The two doctrines on which Wesley differed most from the Reformers are assurance and perfect love. Of the former doctrine only the rudiments are at all prominent today. Certainty or certitude have displaced it, and in this respect Methodist teaching is more in accordance with that of other denominations. Wesley's doctrine is being preached and taught, but it is among small groups who pay little attention to the major denominations.

In the doctrine of perfect love Wesley leaves the Reformers and draws toward the "Catholics." The Reformers and their more faithful disciples had no place for a doctrine of the sinless life; nor were they much interested in what the Catholics call spirituality. In this respect Wesley was no Reformer. His teaching was subjected to very wide criticism. His friend, Whitfield, expressed amazement that Wesley could teach perfect love and yet reject final perseverance, but Wesley, despite many doubts and difficulties over the doctrine, held onto it throughout his life. He was concerned to express his faith that God can give the victory over sin and also can bring men and women into conformity with Christ.

In recent years renewed emphasis has been placed on this doctrine, particularly by Edwin Sangster, and more recently by Eric Baker in his Fernley Hartley lecture. Neither of these writers, however, expresses any interest in Wesley's doctrine of instantaneous perfection, and probably in this they are right. If the Methodists the world over would take to heart the call to the life lived in conformity with Christ, on the foundation of Christ dwelling within them, the doctrine of perfect love could still come to have great importance for the life of the Church.

We conclude, then, by speaking only with considerable reservations about a neo-Wesleyanism, but we do wish to affirm that the theology of Wesley is a remarkable union of what is true and essential in both Catholic and Reformed teaching. Provided Wesley's emphasis on the primacy of divine grace is not displaced by disproportionate interest in what goes on in the human soul, we believe Methodism still has a considerable contribution to make to the understanding and practice of the Christian religion.

## 4. What Kind of Neo-Wesleyanism?

EDWIN P. BOOTH

WE WOULD WELCOME a neo-Wesleyanism if it were rooted in the main values of the first Wesleyanism, namely a direct and unequivocal empirical Christian humanism. The values of human life, of behavior, that is, are the only values for the first Wesleyanism. "Empiricism" refers to the test by fact and experience, rather than by speculation or authority even if the latter be the Church or the Bible. "Christian" refers to the long and faithful effort to transform the teachings of Jesus into an historic institution, and to subsume all effort under the obedience to his ethics. "Humanism" refers to the fact that the entire realm of purpose and method is *in* humanity, *for* humanity, and *by* humans. It is for us men that he lived and died; we men alone, and only by our human reason, can understand him.

But if Mr. Sanders thinks of a neo-Wesleyanism as a part of "a wider Protestant renaissance, characterized by a recovery of biblical theology, a renewed sense of the church, and an increasingly thoughtful liturgical revival," then let us have little of it. Mr. Sanders writes very self-defensively and self-consciously, always a sign of retreat. In the opening paragraphs appear the words: "honest Christians," "sincerity," "honestly," "meaningfully," "authentic Christianity." These are all out of place in an academic or a truly "apologetic" discussion.

It does not illumine a discussion of this nature to bend words like "Catholicity" to one's own position. "Catholicity" does not mean what Mr. Sanders says it does, even though he quotes Mr. Flew and Mr. Davies for his point. The word carries either its original sense, simple universalism, or one of two historic senses, namely, the creedal position of Nicea or the liturgical and administrative growth of Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, Canterbury, etc. In none of these is a neo-Protestantism to find its maturity. The genius of Protestantism was a growth out of these into the "Freedom of a Christian Man." Here it must stand.

Mr. Sanders says, "Nor is all this [i.e. the 'Protestant renaissance'] a retreat from the modern world." It is in reality a direct retreat. It oper-

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ates as if the newer insights of the last four hundred years had never been gained.

All the theologians of this "Protestant renaissance," with the possible exception of Professor Tillich (and Professor Nels Ferré says one must choose between Christianity and Tillich!), operate as if Darwin had never set forth the continuity of life, as if Marx had never re-examined the cultural claims which bound us out of brotherhood, as if Freud had never put some content into Paul's solidarity of sin, as if Einstein had never shown us the impossibility of dogma, as if Gandhi had not demonstrated that God has other voices than ours, as if Schweitzer had not revitalized the "empirical," "subjective" "individualism" (of which Mr. Sanders seems so scornful), as if Kagawa had not raised again the old blessed Jesus outcry against our temples.

There is no way known to man by which the past can return. There is no guide in any "neo-ism." The living mind, the now-present charity, the open hand of co-operation, the ceaseless desire for "holiness"—these are the real Wesley. The search for "holiness" is also the major mark of Kagawa, Gandhi, Schweitzer, Einstein, and Freud. Each names it in his own vocabulary, but each means what Wesley meant. A simple, quiet, obedient, childlike unity and coherence within oneself, where the fact of experience grows ever nearer to the dream of perfection. This is great humanism. I use the word as Rufus Jones did in speaking of George Fox, saying that he was a humanist, in the "noblest sense of that great term." Not in the recovery of the metaphysics (always explanatory of experience) nor of the theology (always the product of the cultural encirclement), but in the recovery of the experience of obedience is the Christian hope of today.

Obedience to some standard is the only essence of the truly good life. So what is the standard? Scriptural holiness? For Wesley, yes; but! Scriptural holiness for Wesley was militantly and rigorously human. For men and men's souls, and for these alone, he interpreted Scripture. And even in this he bent the interpretation to his own personal, and observed, experience. He never closed his mind, and he used it always to justify the necessities of choice made under duress for men's souls. This is truly creative; and all "neo's" are *epigoni*. *Epigoni* are the imitators who follow after the creative leaders. Neo-orthodoxy and neo-Wesleyanism are epigonic as presently presented. A truly creative following of Wesley in our time would enlarge his "world parish" idea into vigorous ethical reconstruction of a world now fluid by reason of the mighty war upheavals that have broken our ancient patterns.

There are a few marks of Wesley's own genius, in which his brother Charles shared according to his given ability. These marks are the result of a mighty union in his life. The union is of Calvinism and Lutheranism. Mr. Sanders misses the real synthesis in his closing paragraphs. He speaks of the "Protestant" and "Catholic" stresses. But it was really the uncompromising Calvinist *ethics* of his Church of England father and mother, uniting with the heart-warming *faith* of Luther, that made Wesley's thought and practice. They misunderstand Calvinism who underrate its ethics because they overestimate its sovereignty of God. Calvinists could only give themselves a relative degree of assurance of salvation by the evidence of ethical obedience. Therefore they have been and are the greatest ethicists of the Church's history. This is their keen kinship to strong monasticism. Wesley had this from Samuel and Susannah. From the Moravians, from Peter Bohler, from Fetter Lane, and finally from Paul through Luther, he experienced the heart's true confidence in God in Christ.

From this union of Luther and Calvin, each at his best, Wesley set Methodism free to its phenomenal expansion of singing confidence and high ethical behavior. If it degenerates into "legalism," "moralism," etc., it is neo-Wesleyanism's fault for transferring authority from experience to theology and/or from conscience to the Bible.

In the evolutional frame of reference of our world Wesley would fit admirably. He would, now as then, bend all organization and all theology to "the life of God in the soul of man."

Mr. Sanders presses his question concerning "authentic Christianity." Who knows what that is? Christianity is rightly caught by Wesley as obedience following upon faith, the whole being centered in "Christ," for whom "Jesus in history" is the content. The Church of the first three centuries isn't authentic Christianity at all, but only authentic for the first three centuries. And even within them, we must ask, whose Christianity? Paul's or Peter's; Tertullian's or Origen's; Irenaeus' or Marcion's? When will our professors and theologians learn the simple lesson that there never was and never can be authentic Christianity in theology or church, but only in experience? And the experience is as variable in the form it takes as are all other great values in human culture. It is not surprising that this essay appeals to "that blessed word *eschatological*"; for the retreat-word par excellence of Western Christianity, called before the bar of evolutionary social progress to account for its world-shaking wars, has been this word of surrender to an ancient primeval hope, now supported by none of the great levels of data before our human reason.

Concerning the closing paragraph: "Evangelical" and "Catholic" are not justifiable terms to denote "separate characteristic stresses" within Christian faith and life. It is arbitrary and scholastic to do this, and cruel, too. The real issue lies between "revelation" and "reason," "invasion" and "normal," "discontinuity" and "continuity," etc. In all of these both the Wesleys knew in hymn and sermon, but chiefly in life, that what God had joined together was his own spirit with ours; and that "this was the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

God grant that our neo-Wesleyanism, if we must have it, be Jesus-centered, humanistic, social-ethical, and deeply seeking after that true holiness which exists in life and deed and only there. The union of the two hymn verses Mr. Sanders quotes is accurate for the first Wesleyanism, and in our day for us, too; but ask no theology for it except the theology of symbolic indication.

I have written this in Oxford, a name loved of all English-speaking Christians; the home of, among many others, three Johns—Wyclif, Wesley, Newman. I hope my American Methodist brethren will remember their priceless heritage from a free people and continue a free gospel. No "neo-isms" are really available, except a neo-Jesus way of life!

## 5. Continuity and Change in Methodism

FREDERICK A. NORWOOD

IN 1824 THE REDOUBTABLE Peter Cartwright wrote in John Scripps' autograph book, "I am a sound old Episcopale methodist Preacher and am fully opposed to all innovations."<sup>1</sup> In this affirmation of unbending orthodoxy he was not being a very good Methodist—nor was he being true to himself. Few frontier preachers were as adaptably innovative as he. The curious combination found in this man, of loyalty to the faith handed down and of adaptability under changing circumstances, illustrates a prime feature of the Wesleyan tradition. For so, in a different age and scene, was John Wesley. The term "neo-Wesleyanism" suggests an attempt to recover something cast forever in a particular mold, to which all else must be forced into conformity. No movement could be farther removed from the original model. There exists today a neo-Wesleyan force only in so far as there has ever been a *Wesleyan* tradition.

This movement set on foot by John Wesley and his associates has been the subject of much discussion, especially in the last few years, in both the United Kingdom and the United States. The ecumenical movement, to which Wesley made notable contributions in its early history, has aroused concern at two distinct levels: (1) In what ways can Methodism share in the development toward Christian unity? (2) In what respect does Methodism possess singular and special emphases of faith and forms of expression which can be offered to the judgment and edification of other Christians? Experience has shown that the second question had better be faced before the first. This ecumenical situation, attended by the virtual exhaustion of the more superficial forms of optimistic liberalism, has provided some of the energy for a contemporary revival of interest in the Wesleyan heritage.

### I

What is the nature of that heritage? Since the theme of this paper is the elements of continuity and change in Methodism, no attempt is made here to discuss the content in detail. Professor Sanders is entirely correct

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<sup>1</sup> P. 24. This manuscript is in the library of Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois.

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in his point that Wesley's theology must be understood in the broad context of Anglican theology. The child is an expression of the parent. The *Journal* and *Letters* are full of evidence of this strong and abiding Anglican rootage.<sup>2</sup>

A part of that heritage is the comprehensive nature of the theological definition. Room is provided for varying convictions on even the central affirmations. The validity of the ancient catholic definitions on the nature of the Godhead and the person of Christ is recognized. The special emphases of the Reformation find expression in general, and more particularly in the interpretations of the more evangelical Anglicans and the Puritans. From these levels of catholic and evangelical doctrine Wesley emerged with a theological perspective devoted to the proclamation of the Way of Salvation centered in the Atonement, by which the work of Christ was made effective by the Holy Spirit in each man's spiritual journey from bondage in sin through justification to fulfillment in the perfect love of God.

The Wesleyan theological heritage must therefore be seen in the special context of the "plan of salvation" which John Bunyan a century earlier had laid out in the unforgettable drama of the Pilgrim Way. This was pre-eminently an existential theology—although Wesley would never have used that term. Nor would he, incidentally, have used, as Sanders suggests, that other word *eschatological*. His own preface to the *Standard Sermons* makes quite clear his distaste for theological fad words. The worst of all spiritual perils is stagnation. Christian must always beware of falling asleep in the Enchanted Ground. One may fall from whatever height, may not rest even in the perfect love of God. There is growth, as Philip Watson rightly emphasizes, *in* as well as *to* perfection. The perfection of which Wesley speaks is relative to that which is possible in a fallen world and to the *working* love of God which is a process, not a state. This understanding made possible for Wesley what was impossible for Luther, who made perfection so absolute as to be impossible. Wesley was dazzled by the perfection of God. Luther was blinded by the imperfection of man.

Wesley's theology is, then briefly, centered at all points in the Atonement, and finds expression in the plan of salvation prepared for all who hearken to the gospel with ears tuned by God's prevenient grace, realize their own sinful condition and deep need in the light of God's convincing grace, are born again to a new life through justifying grace of which they may have a clear assurance through the witness of the Spirit, and are led

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, London: Epworth Press, 1931, 8 vols., II, 57; *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, London: Epworth Press, 1938, 8 vols., II, 274; IV, 430.

on toward perfection through sanctifying grace. All is the work of God.

There should be no doubt of the continuation of the Wesleyan theological tradition into American Methodism. Our fathers the circuit riders were far better versed in Wesley's theology than are most Methodist preachers today. Log cabins resounded to disputations over everything from original sin to the Last Judgment, with ammunition drawn from the very respectable writings of Wesley himself, William Fletcher, Richard Watson, and others. It is interesting to note that extensive review articles were carried in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* on the publication of American editions of Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism* in 1828<sup>3</sup> (which became available in four volumes at a price of \$6.50, an amount equal to about six per cent of the annual allowance for unmarried preachers), Watson's *Theological Institutes* in 1830,<sup>4</sup> and Wesley's *Works* in 1832.<sup>5</sup> These were all presented in long review articles of forty to sixty pages each. When D. D. Whedon reviewed after midcentury Abel Stevens' *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, the emphasis of both author and reviewer was on the continuity of the Wesleyan theological tradition through the Articles of Religion and Wesley's own official standards, which "was, and still is, made an inexorable test" of the Methodist position.<sup>6</sup>

To what degree this test has remained "inexorable" is subject to dispute. The continuity, however, was clearly apparent through most of the nineteenth century, not only in the histories of Jesse Lee, Nathan Bangs, and Stevens, but in the journals of the preachers, who, if they could not spell, could nevertheless tell the difference between justification and sanctification and carry on debates with Unitarians and Presbyterians. They were at least vaguely aware of the real position of Arminius, and did not equate it with latitudinarianism, with humanism, or with modern liberalism. Neo-Wesleyanism does not mean the return of American Methodism to English Methodism, but rather the recovery of a heritage already long rooted in America. Wesleyan theology is already part of the American Methodist heritage!

The continuity is to be observed also in the areas of polity and practice. One grand example is the itineracy, integral part of Wesleyanism on both sides of the Atlantic, although not a part of the contemporary neo-Wesleyan

<sup>3</sup> *Methodist Quarterly Review* (hereafter *MQR*, variations in title ignored), XI (1828), 413-420. This was regarded as especially helpful against "Hopkinsian Calvinists."

<sup>4</sup> *MQR*, XII (1830), 272-307, 361-393. The work was called "a standard body of divinity" neither Calvinist nor Pelagian.

<sup>5</sup> *MQR*, XIV (1832), 49-71.

<sup>6</sup> *MQR*, L (1868), 93-114.

revival. Francis Asbury clearly found himself in complete agreement with Wesley when the venerable leader wrote to him in 1785, expressing surprise at three-year appointments, which were "a vehement alteration of the Methodist discipline."

I myself may perhaps have as much variety of matter as many of our preachers. Yet, I am well assured, were I to preach three years together in one place, both the people and myself would grow as dead as stones. Indeed, this is quite contrary to the whole economy of Methodism: God has always wrought among us by a constant change of preachers.<sup>7</sup>

All of the reviews of Stevens' four volumes on American Methodism noted the importance of Asbury in preserving this part of the Methodist way.<sup>8</sup> As the itineracy carried over, so also did the structure of the society, the band, the class, the select society (in a small way), and standards of discipline as reflected in the Rules of the United Societies and other documents.<sup>9</sup>

The point is simply this: The loss of the Wesleyan heritage was not the loss by American Methodism of something that flourished in England. It was rather the loss of that which had long since become as thoroughly American as English. Americans abandoned their own special heritage in so far as they parted company with Wesley, Fletcher, and Watson. Many of them never really wandered very far. The continuity was not broken by the Atlantic, nor by the Revolution, nor by the Methodist Episcopal Church, nor by Reconstruction, nor even by the Dazzling Decades and the Jazz Age. Wesley was not so much rejected as laid aside. He is now being dusted off in the housecleaning engendered in part by the ecumenical movement.

## II

One major aspect that continued into the American church was adaptability to circumstances—in the midst of continuity, change. D. D. Whedon in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* in 1868 rightly wrote of "the Methodist peculiarity of providing for an exigency when it arises."<sup>10</sup> This peculiarity was, of course, straight out of Wesley. Oh, how reluctantly he came to those moments of decision scattered along his career, moments that demanded a departure from the customary way, particularly the Anglican way! One can almost share with him the inner struggles that led to open field preaching, lay preaching, and finally to presbyterial ordination. What

<sup>7</sup> Wesley, *Letters*, VII, 294, to Francis Asbury, September 30, 1785.

<sup>8</sup> *MQR*, XLI (1859), 87-106; XLV (1863), 204-226; L (1868), 93-114.

<sup>9</sup> The broad question of discipline in church membership is discussed in Frederick A. Norwood, *Church Membership in the Methodist Tradition*, Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1958, 141 p.

<sup>10</sup> *MQR*, L (1868), 109.

a tone of awe and wonder is in that famous letter to the brethren in America in which he remarked about the "very uncommon train of providences . . . wherewith God has so strangely made them free"!<sup>11</sup>

Many have noted what, for lack of a better term and in spite of connotations acquired later under non-Methodist auspices, may be called the pragmatism of Wesley. "If any will point out a more rational and scriptural way," he wrote in this same letter, "of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than I have taken." Here is that blessed element of tentativeness that would relieve the obsidian absolutism of so many Christian affirmations. Some of the more radical Puritans possessed this saving ingredient of humble willingness to receive yet more light from the Lord. This also was part of Wesley's Anglican heritage.

The venerable father of Methodism, therefore, should not have been in the least surprised that this spirit of adaptability continued in the work of his American sons and daughters. It was only natural that the founders of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Christmas Conference in 1784 agreed that "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his Sons in the Gospel, ready in Matters belonging to Church-Government, to obey his Commands."<sup>12</sup> It was equally natural that, two years later, when Wesley's instruction that Richard Whatcoat be chosen superintendent met with opposition, the rule was modified to permit variation from his will when it proved "incompatible with their rights and privileges as an independent Church."<sup>13</sup> This action removing the pledge of obedience from the *Discipline* of 1787 also resulted in the omission of any reference to Wesley. His name was restored in 1789 in a most devious statement to the effect that he, with Coke and Asbury, "exercise the Episcopal office . . . by regular order and succession," but that only the latter two "have been elected, by the unanimous suffrages of the General Conference, to superintend the Methodist connection in America."<sup>14</sup> With the death of Wesley in 1791 his name, but not his influence, left the *Discipline* forever.

Thus the adaptability manifested by Wesley in England and by the Americans at the Christmas Conference resulted in the growth on the new

<sup>11</sup> Wesley, *Letters*, VII, 237-239, September 10, 1784.

<sup>12</sup> *Discipline*, 1785, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Bangs, Nathan, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1839, 2 vols., I, 277.

<sup>14</sup> Lee, Jesse, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America*, Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810, 402 pp., p. 140; Bangs, I, 278. Bangs also rejects the suggestion of Coke that the removal of his name contributed to Wesley's demise. Cf. pp. 329-330.

continent, out of the soil of historic Christianity as processed in the Evangelical Revival, of a most amazing ecclesiastical tree, the Methodist Episcopal Church, within a few years shorn of many of the features Wesley had planned—like the Sunday service—and equipped with such new-fangled components as book concerns, quadrennial delegated general conferences, and Sunday schools, to say nothing of woodsy circuit riders, five-hundred-mile circuits, presiding elders, and camp meetings.

Theologically, also, this pragmatism left its mark. Although it is clear that early American Methodism remained faithful to the body of Wesleyan doctrine and was conversant with the basic theological writings, new challenges called for new responses. No longer was the Establishment a major problem. Quietistic Moravians were no problem. But Unitarians were. Hide-bound New England Calvinist Congregationalists were. Enthusiastic Baptist immersionists of the Appalachian Plateau were. Contentious Campbellites of Kentucky were. Much of the peculiar history of American Methodist theology can be explained by reference to the actual doctrinal struggles in which Methodists were involved for decades. Needless to say, these conflicts did not encourage the more sophisticated forms of doctrinal formulation. Aberrations of thought and superficialities of interpretation constituted a normal part of the barbarization of the frontier. Only in the more settled portions of the land in the minds of the better trained educators and editorial leaders did theology take deep root and find wholesome nourishment. Adaptation of Methodist theology especially to frontier conditions sometimes left results less than admirable. The wonder is that even here so much of the original heritage was preserved.

In the main, however, it must be said that the most revolutionary change wrought in the American line of Methodism was the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Least of all the founders realized the ultimate significance of what they were doing in 1784. That the Wesleyan societies in the Anglican Church should have gone through a sudden metamorphosis and emerged a "church" was a development certainly not anticipated in 1738—or 1744. Countless questions were left unanswered by this step. Most of them were tied up in one way or another with the basic question: How does a community without independent status, in which the Word of God is preached chiefly by unordained lay preachers and the sacraments generally administered not at all, go about becoming a church?

Wesley had already found the true community of faith in the disciplined devotion of the societies and classes rather than in the spiritually amorphous structure of the Church of England. Can a community of Christians bound

together in the Love of God constitute a church? May the requirements of proclamation of the gospel and administration of sacraments be bent to accommodate the necessities of such a community? In the working out of these questions, whether consciously or unconsciously, American Methodists altered the direction of Wesley's movement. Perhaps this new direction was implicit in the movement from the beginning and was restrained only by the unswerving loyalty of the founder to the doctrine and worship, and in the main the polity, of the Church in which he was reared. This position beclouded the issue in England long after it had become crystal-clear across the Atlantic.

The issue was clear and the new church was formed. But Methodists have not been sure from that time to just what sort of ecclesiastical creature they had given birth. Although they now had a church, they kept on acting as if they still lived in "societies"—and even long continued the use of that term in designation of local churches. To this day American Methodism partakes of both concepts of the church: on the one hand the small disciplined community of faith forged into society and class; on the other the imposing structure of ecclesiasticality so dear to the hearts of episcopal administrators and board secretaries. It is the Great Church spread over the face of the land. It is also the little church up on the hillside. Methodists must learn to keep both facets of this heritage in central focus without becoming schizo-ecclesiastic in the process. There resides in this wholesome tension a major potential contribution of Methodism to the ecumenical movement of our times.

### III

Beyond these evidences of change in the American Methodist tradition one recognizes a more exotic element that cannot escape the designation, "the maverick strain." From the very beginning, years before Wesley thought to send missionaries to the New World, certain Methodist laymen and laywomen, fresh from the spare green valleys of Ireland, without so much as an if-you-please to Wesley, settled in New York and Maryland and presently gathered into nascent societies, in which they heard sermons by lay preachers, practiced Methodist discipline, and, among those following Robert Strawbridge, observed the Lord's Supper.

This early flouting of the ecclesiastical principle that everything should be done decently and in good order set the stage for a whole series of unprecedented enterprises, none of which enjoyed official approval. The maverick strain broke forth in the Fluvanna Conference of 1779 down in

Virginia. Here some of the preaching brethren, still lay preachers all, gathered in conference as officially designated the year before but without either the presence or the blessing of Francis Asbury, who was by now the acknowledged leader. In that meeting they decided the time had come for reformation without tarrying for any. The people needed the sacraments. The people wanted the sacraments. The people should have the sacraments. Therefore a ministry must be provided for the administration thereof. By the laying on of hands one on another, they proceeded to a sort of do-it-yourself presbyterial ordination, without authority either from Asbury or from Wesley. The comment made almost a hundred years later by a most respectable leader and editor is illuminating:

Transcendentally glorious was that scene in the wilderness, so accordant with common sense, where they who rejected in theory the popish fiction of succession, threw off also its practical trammels, and, with solemn prayer and the imposition of hands, set apart chosen men to ministerial functions, thus recording a protest against mere ecclesiasticism as opposed to spiritual good, in behalf of a people soon to exercise a greater moral power than any other on the continent.<sup>15</sup>

This maverick strain found its way into the official heart of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A hint of it is found in the refusal of the American ministers to remain bound by their pledge of loyalty to Wesley in 1785. Thomas Ware, who was a reliable and responsible witness, put the matter this way:

To place the power of deciding all questions discussed, or nearly all, in the hands of the superintendents, was what could never be introduced among us—a fact which we thought Mr. Wesley could not but have known, had he known us as well as we ought to have been known by Dr. Coke. . . . In the first effusion of our zeal, we had adopted a rule binding ourselves to obey Mr. Wesley; and this rule must be rescinded, or we must be content, not only to receive Mr. Whatcoat as one of our superintendents, but also, as our brethren of the British Conference, with barely discussing subjects, and leaving the decision of them to two or three individuals. This was the chief cause of our rescinding the rule.<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Coke in due time discovered this new strain as he encountered the defiance of Nelson Reed, one of the leading preachers, at one of the early conferences, probably in 1796. As the story goes, when Coke was charged with "popery" in proposing a piece of strong legislation, he

then seized the paper, containing his resolution, and tore it up, remarking as he glanced about the Conference, "Do you think yourself equal to me?" Nelson Reed . . . then arose and turning to Bishop Asbury said: "Doctor Coke has asked whether

<sup>15</sup> *MQR*, L (1868), 103.

<sup>16</sup> Ware, Thomas, *Sketches of the Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware*, New York: G. Lane & P. P. Sandford, 1842, 264 pp., pp. 130-131.

we think ourselves equal to him—I answer, yes, we *do* think ourselves equal to him, . . . and more than that, we think ourselves equal to Doctor Coke's king.”<sup>17</sup>

The most famous maverick in early Methodism was James O'Kelly, irascible presiding elder from Virginia. With typical Irish energy he had devoted himself to the cause of Methodism for many years until, already old and almost worn out, he struck at the heart of Asbury's authority in 1792 with a motion in General Conference to permit appeal by itinerants against the appointment of the bishop. Asbury exercised the same authority Wesley had in England, and possessed absolute power of appointment. Although he took into consideration the individual needs of man and congregation, he was obligated to consult no one. At this time British Methodism was moving toward acceptance of the very principle of appeal for which O'Kelly argued, and later the cabinet system accomplished much the same purpose in America. But at this conference of 1792 the issue lay between O'Kelly and Asbury. The latter wisely absented himself from the conference and let the debate run its course. The very vehemence of the proponents of the reform helped defeat the motion, lost by a large majority. O'Kelly and some of his followers withdrew and subsequently organized the Republican Methodist Church, which ended in the disintegration common to schisms.

Now O'Kelly, impatient, opinionated, untactful, overbearing, deserves credit for one thing. He was willing to stand up to Asbury. Any man deserves credit for that sort of courage, even if in a poor cause. And O'Kelly's cause possessed much merit. Thomas Ware, at first sympathetic to the reform motion, thought that, if it had been defended by its proponents with less rancor and pressure, it might well have prevailed.<sup>18</sup> O'Kelly is the prototype of the Methodist democrat. The “Advertisement” to his *Author's Apology*, printed in Richmond, Virginia, in 1798, proclaimed:

If Christians are free citizens of Zion, they should prize those liberties, seeing they were purchased with the precious blood of Christ. By adding reproaches to oppression, can never tend to heal a distressed mind. If my narrative is thought destitute of merit, I can give no preface that can possibly grace it.<sup>19</sup>

His narrative was chiefly a personal attack on Asbury. Some of the offspring of this maverick strain have been odd indeed.

After O'Kelly came others, down to our own day. There were the reformers who finally broke off to form the Methodist Protestant Church.

<sup>17</sup> Sprague, W. B., *Annals of the American Pulpit*, New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1865, VII, 70. Quoted in W. W. Sweet, Abel Stevens, and other histories.

<sup>18</sup> Ware, pp. 220-221.

<sup>19</sup> The *Author's Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Government*, Richmond: John Dixon, 1798, 120 pp., p. 2.

But by no means all went off in schism. There was William McKendree, who had been caught up for a short time in the O'Kelly movement. When he was elected bishop, he refused to assume the absolute authority exercised by Asbury and insisted on a consultation on appointments that led to the cabinet system. There was William Burke, sturdy secretary of the Western Conference, expelled on charges of contempt for his superiors. There was the resourceful Bishop William Taylor, who carried on a one-man missionary enterprise and repeatedly embarrassed his more conventional associates. There was Bishop Francis J. McConnell, whose lifetime of Christian service was peppered with unconventional attitudes and unpopular causes. Almost every annual conference has had its independent characters who would not be put down by either episcopal authority or majority vote. The fact that occasionally such conduct has smacked more of the eccentric than the responsible does not obscure the importance of the maverick strain in American Methodism.

A valid revival of the Wesleyan heritage must therefore include all that is enduring in Wesley's theology and discipline, including the built-in provision for change and adaptation which is a part of that heritage. In America particularly a place must be made for the creative mavericks, unbranded, unowned, free.

## 6. Neo-Wesleyanism, Neo-Orthodoxy and the New Testament

CHESTER A. PENNINGTON

**S**OME OF THE MOST EXCITING—and excited—theological conversations ever to have taken place in Methodism are currently swirling around the term “neo-Wesleyanism.” The word may mean one thing to a “liberal,” something else to a “conservative,” and something yet again to a careful student of Wesley who may be unwilling to accept either of those labels. One useful way to clarify the meaning of the term may be to relate the thought of Wesley himself to contemporary theology.

Such a comparison was suggested in a message from the Council of Bishops of The Methodist Church, issued in April of 1958. In this statement the Bishops point to an apparent contrast between the teachings of John Wesley and the current trends of theology known generally as neo-orthodoxy. The Bishops express some lack of enthusiasm for recent theological imports from Europe: they are un-American, because continental in origin; they are pessimistic and defeatist, as a consequence of the recent tragic events on the Continent. “Methodism,” the Bishops declare, “needs a neo-Wesleyanism.” Many Methodists can heartily endorse this particular sentence, without being quite so sure that there is a sharp contrast between neo-Wesleyanism and neo-orthodoxy.

Let us not be offended by a term. It is a favorite byplay among some Methodist spokesmen to dismiss airily everything that can conceivably be labeled “neo-orthodox.” Some Methodists seem to think that just to use the label is sufficient to discredit most contemporary theology. Admittedly, some others think that the label “liberal” is equally lethal!

Can it be agreed that any responsible body of thinkers cannot be dismissed simply by calling them a name? Can we agree that the term itself is unimportant? There is reason to suspect that the label “neo-orthodoxy” has outlived its usefulness, but we are hard put to it to devise an adequate substitute. Perhaps for Methodists “neo-Wesleyanism” may be such an alternative. But the latter term must be related to the former, which still

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denotes a particular cluster of emphases that characterize much contemporary Christian thought.

#### WHAT IS NEO-ORTHODOXY?

Before trying to indicate the main thrust of this movement, a few general comments may be made. First of all, the geographical origin of an idea is not ultimately important. The really significant question is whether it is true.

As a matter of fact, a pretty good case can be made for the thesis that most of the ideas which have shaped the modern world have had their origin in Europe. The roots of democratic philosophy are certainly British and French. The dominant ideas of modern civilization have been "made abroad"—Darwinism, Marxism, Freudianism. Indeed one may ask, "Where do you suppose that the 'liberalism' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries originated?" The answer would have to be "In Germany!" So the critical question is not "Where did an idea come from?" or "Where did the movement start?" but rather, "How true is it?" And for the Christian, this can only mean, "How is it related to New Testament Christianity as historically understood?"

Furthermore, to suggest that neo-orthodoxy originated in postwar or between-the-wars Europe is not quite accurate in respect of time. The roots of this movement go back to certain perceptive prophets of the late nineteenth century who quite accurately foresaw the collapse of their culture, who were frightfully accurate in their understanding of contemporary man, and to whom the Christian Church was simply an organized hypocrisy. When their prophecies came true, and Western man stood unmasked amid his crumbled masterpieces, is it any wonder that theologians took a sober look at what they saw? And shall we Americans, in our insulated comfort, learn nothing from all this?

One further comment may be addressed to those who express skepticism about neo-orthodoxy because, they say, they "don't know what it is." They find so much complexity and variety within this movement that they claim to be confused about what it really stands for. They can't "pin it down."

It may be helpful to note that this movement is almost half a century old—dating it, for convenience, from Barth's Commentary on Romans. Obviously, in any virile movement that persists for such a time, there will be many varieties of expression and emphasis, even conflicts. It is, therefore, quite impossible to point to any single conviction and say, "This is

neo-orthodoxy." But it is perfectly possible to indicate a few central affirmations which have characterized this and later forms of theological inquiry.

First, there has been a deeper and more serious reading of the human situation. Doubtless the catastrophic events that laid waste to so much of Europe had their effects upon this aspect of Christian thought. But can anyone, even in America, deny the tragic character of the twentieth century? Does anyone dare ignore whatever lessons these events would teach us? The whole meaning of the twentieth century has driven honest men to reconsider the seriousness of our human condition. There is plenty of evidence that our predicament cannot be exhaustively described in ethical or sociological terms. The insights of "depth psychology" have extended our understanding of the serious dimensions of our needs.

As Christians, we say that our problem is not simply that we do naughty and frequently evil things. It is that we are the kind of persons who are capable of such deeds. We are profoundly at odds with God, and therefore deeply at odds with ourselves and our fellows. We need help—and badly. If we are to be rescued out of our predicament, if we are to be met at the point of our deepest need, someone must come to us from outside of that predicament, from beyond that need—or at least from a point of victory over such circumstances.

So we are led to the second recovery of contemporary theology. It is the classic Christian affirmation that God has come to us in Christ and has acted on our behalf. He has shared with us the agony of our need, the helplessness of our involvement. He has acted redemptively in the midst of that need, in order that we may be rescued, drawn out of our impotence.

Along with these theological developments there has been a new interest in and a deeper understanding of Scripture. The recovery of the authority of Scripture and the deepening of theological insight have taken place together, interacting upon and reinforcing each other.

The century-old scientific study of Scripture has brought us into a creative and constructive period of biblical inquiry. It certainly is not a return to the older fundamentalist point of view. All the values of the "liberal" understanding of the historical development of Scripture are conserved. But there has been a renewed affirmation that God's eternal Word has been uttered historically, and that the primary source for our knowing his Word is Scripture, which consists of the words of men interpreting the Word of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

These are, I believe, the main thrusts of the deepest and most authentic

movements in the Christian church in our time. The course of events in midcentury corroborates the tragic view of our human condition. The well-established insights of depth psychology underscore the Christian understanding of our need. We have been driven to a more realistic acknowledgment of our desperate condition and a more profound understanding of God's response.

#### WHAT IS WESLEYANISM?

Now let us try to see whether there is any relation between the thought of John Wesley and these contemporary affirmations. We may take our cue from a sentence in the Bishops' Message, in which they summarize the faith of Wesley, in apparent contrast with much current thought. Their statement is this: "John Wesley was not a man to underestimate the sinfulness of man, but he knew man could be redeemed." This is surely a valid judgment. Let us look at it more carefully.

To say that Wesley did not underestimate the sinfulness of man is something of an understatement. Some of the most moving and eloquent passages in his sermons are those in which he depicts the desperateness and depravity of the human condition: the anxiety in which we are caught, the pride which we assert, the haunting guilt which we cannot escape. Anyone who reads Wesley's sermons with some attention must be struck with the fact that, although he did not preach hellfire and damnation in the usual sense of the phrase, he certainly had much to say about the sinfulness of man. Indeed, he went a good deal further in describing our human condition than some of us would. He used the old phrase "total depravity," which most of us would not use today. The fact is that Wesley painted a somber and even tragic picture of our condition and need.

At this point, Wesley was rejecting the popularly accepted teachings of the leaders of the church in his century. It is not quite accurate to say, as some do, that Methodism's only theological conflict was with Calvinism. Because in the person of Wesley, Methodism was already in conflict with errors within the Anglican Church. This is why he was refused permission to preach in church after church.

What Wesley rejected was rationalism, the moralism, the optimistic humanism which characterized so much Anglican thought in his century. His was an optimistic age, marked by great faith in man and his capacity for progress. In the church, this took the form of confidence in reason above revelation, justification by works rather than by faith. Wesley repudiated all this and insisted that our human condition can only be described

in terms of revolt against God, the consequent derangement of our distinctive powers, the multiplication of social evils, from all of which we cannot save ourselves. God must do it for us.

So the second affirmation of Wesley's preaching was that man can be saved from his sins. But how? Here Wesley used the classic Protestant terms: We are saved by grace through faith. Everywhere Wesley clearly affirmed the primacy of grace. God has taken the initiative in helping us, so that everything we do is always in response to something he has already done.

(May I make a personal confession here? It took me a long time to see this! I can understand perfectly why many Methodists still don't see it. In all my struggles with theological issues, I have been a champion of human freedom. I have always insisted that man is a free, responsible agent, and that God will never do anything to compromise this freedom. I still believe this. But what I have discovered is that this very freedom is the gift of God's grace. And John Wesley was one of my tutors in this lesson.)

Wesley clearly and repeatedly affirmed the classic doctrine of prevenient grace. This is an old-fashioned term which is not often heard in contemporary circles. In fact, Wesley used an even more antique form, calling it "preventing grace." What this great doctrine means is that the grace of God is prior to every response I can make. God takes the initiative and keeps it. His grace is continually running on ahead of us, so that no matter where we twist or dodge, God is already there to meet us. Even when we do turn to him, it is because he is drawing us toward himself.

Was not Wesley, then, a champion of freedom and of conscience? He was indeed. But he carefully insisted that freedom and conscience are evidences of prevenient grace. They are not inherent human capacities. They are God's good gifts to us. We lost them, through our sin; but God restores them to us, by grace. We are free by the gracious gift of God. Our conscience is the working of God's grace.

We can be saved. This is good news. But we can be saved only by grace through faith.

It ought to be pointed out that this is one basis for Wesley's opposition to Calvinism. Calvinism, as popularly understood, not only contradicted the character of God as revealed in Christ. It denied the universality of grace, upon which Wesley insisted. For prevenient grace is universal, given to every man. God wills to draw all men to himself. He keeps the initiative in seeking them. Men can reject this grace—and they do,

to their eternal misery. But men can accept this grace. And when they do, God gives them more grace; "saving grace" was Wesley's term. By this grace men are forgiven, reconciled to God, made new creatures.

What is the ground for these doctrines of Wesley? In his complex Christian experience there were many influences working on him. But the determining influence came to be the New Testament. Later in his life, when he was preparing the preface to the collection of his sermons, he wrote, "Let me be a man of one book." We are familiar with this quotation. We must remember that he was already a man of many books. Here again there is a complexity to Wesley which many of his American followers have overlooked. He was a genuine scholar, thoroughly trained in the academic disciplines of his day. And it was on the strength of such training that he made the decision that Scripture should be the sufficient rule of his faith and practice.

Surely any close attention to Wesley will drive us back to the New Testament. I sometimes suspect that he would be a little embarrassed at all the attention that is being given to him. He would say, "You are not a minister of the gospel according to Wesley. You are a minister of the gospel of Christ. I am pleased that you are reading my works. But you dare not stop there. You had better go further back—to the New Testament itself." And indeed this is where we should go. For we can only speak a truly Christian word to our generation as we try to speak, in our own vocabulary, what we have discerned in the New Testament.

If these observations are at all accurate, the relation between Wesleyanism and neo-orthodoxy is quite direct. In his day, Wesley sought to recover the authentic New Testament faith, disentangling it from the false alliances into which it had been forced, and freeing it to do its redeeming work in the lives of men and women who encountered Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Neo-orthodoxy is an attempt to communicate this same New Testament faith, even more clearly and precisely understood, to the special needs and issues of our time and in the peculiar vocabulary of our time. A similar work of disentangling has had to be done. A similar work of proclamation remains to be done.

In each instance, it is not the particular forms or terminologies that are important. In neither instance is a new authoritarianism desired. It is the gospel which is to be declared—the gospel of God's redeeming act in Jesus Christ, by which we may be reconciled and renewed.

Some of us believe that the one great task before Methodism in this

period of history is the recovery of this gospel and its proclamation to men who, quite literally, have never heard this saving word convincingly affirmed. This would represent an authentic neo-Wesleyanism.

#### A DISTINCT ACCENT

Is neo-Wesleyanism, then, simply a rehash of neo-orthodoxy? Or is there a distinctive emphasis which characterizes Wesleyanism, and which may have special relevance to our time? I believe the answers to be, in order, No and Yes.

Is it possible to ask without denominational pride, whether Methodism has any special role to play in the ecumenical encounter with other churches and in the evangelistic encounter with our culture? Do we have any distinctive—or at least characteristic—word to inject into the ecumenical conversation? Does the peculiar character of our time call for any particular emphasis which Methodism may be especially equipped to offer?

I believe that there is a distinctive accent to the Wesleyan proclamation of the Gospel. It is not exclusive by any means. (If it were, it would probably be eccentric!) But there is a characteristic emphasis which has marked Methodism from its beginning, which has been shared by several vital movements in the history of the church, and which may have special importance in our deeply troubled but deeply insightful day. Wesley's doctrines concerning the work of the Holy Spirit constitute this distinct Methodist accent.

Did American Methodism set out "to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land?" One may ask what has happened to the doctrine of scriptural holiness. It was lost, some time ago, in the negative moralism which quickly came to characterize Methodism. And since then it has been even more deeply buried under the welter of social enthusiasms and self-help programs which have become popular.

Let us not be offended by the old-fashioned term "scriptural holiness." Let the term go, if by any means we can recover the substance of its meaning. This will be found in Wesley's doctrines concerning the work of the Spirit, assurance, and growth to Christian perfection. We cannot claim that these doctrines are exclusively Wesleyan, but only that they were distinctive of the original impulse which gave rise to Methodism. If they have been discarded because proven invalid, then let them remain in limbo. But if they have been dropped by default, then let us at least re-examine them.

Here I can only speak personally—and with considerable hesitancy.

Let me simply state my convictions, and let the propositions be given whatever consideration they deserve.

1. If there is any lack of convincing hope in contemporary theology, the corrective lies in a recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The neglect of this doctrine is unfortunate, because its main intent is not to peer curiously into the interior life of Deity but to affirm the continuing power of God to transform our human lives.

Some men are disaffected with neo-orthodoxy because of what they take to be its pessimism. Let me say that I have never found it to be pessimistic. Its forthright realism is occasionally shocking but never elevating. Many of us are better able to cope with the unpleasant realities of our human condition just because we have been forced to look with honesty at the whole truth. But if there is any lack of positive affirmation in some current theology, where shall we look for the corrective? We cannot return to any good-natured optimism or retreat to an old-fashioned confidence in human nature.

The New Testament would suggest that the resources of authentic hope are to be found in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Personal assurance and spiritual growth are the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That this is a characteristic emphasis of Wesleyanism is abundantly clear. Admittedly, Wesley himself was not always consistent in his exposition, and his followers have frequently added to the confusion. But the time is ripe for a serious reconsideration of these insights.

Colin Williams makes this point in his very useful study, *John Wesley's Theology Today*:<sup>1</sup> "At a time when our theology has recaptured the depth dimension of sin and has learned again the true 'pessimism of nature' that marks this awareness, it is the more imperative that we know the heights of the 'optimism of grace' that flow from the faith relationship with Christ, the Victor over sin and death." More specifically, it is the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit which portrays this "optimism of grace" and holds out the promises of Christian growth.

2. The recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must follow upon the renewal of an adequate Christian understanding of sin and redemption. There is no use in talking about Christian growth until there is the assurance of Christian life. Sanctification is impossible without justification. We deceive our people by talking to them about what the Holy Spirit can do for them, if we imply that this can occur apart from the experience of reconciliation and forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Abingdon Press, 1960, p. 190.

In *The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective*,<sup>2</sup> Harold DeWolf makes a perceptive comment in this regard.

The pathetic exclusive preoccupation of some conservatives with gaining initial decisions for Christ rightly stirs an eager counter-concern to gain continuing growth in the Christian life. Unfortunately, much effort is made to cultivate Christian living in persons who have not committed themselves to Christ at all. . . . In the lives of such persons the basic evangelistic work remains to be done. No amount of good ideas or good works will avail for them until they have made the essential commitment of themselves to Christ. This is not a matter of more gradual development. It is a matter of confrontation, of divine-human encounter, and of decision.

Before we can promise men the rewards of Christian life, we must win them to a reconciled relation with God as Savior. On the other hand, we may speak more convincingly and persuasively to our people if we portray for them the full range of Christian experience: the assurance, the maturity, the joy which are the work of the indwelling Spirit.

3. The work of the Holy Spirit may be—I would be tempted to say, must be—interpreted in terms of the well-established insights of depth psychology. Two words of caution must be spoken here. First of all, we are not specialists in psychology, and must be careful of uninformed use of terms. On the other hand, few professions are more inexact in speaking of human personality than the ministry. We speak of "heart," "soul," "spirit," "mind," with poetic inexactness, conveying equally uncertain meanings to our people. I believe we must learn to speak more exactly about the self, the personality in all its complexity.

Most members of our churches know enough about psychology to have a certain respect for those areas of the self which are commonly called unconscious or subconscious. The exact terms may not be in good repute among all schools of psychology. But most students are pretty well convinced that these reaches of the self are of decisive importance in motivation and in the achievement of maturity.

The crucial question is whether this area of the self is accessible to God. I believe it is. And I believe that this is the deepest significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We can open ourselves to the indwelling of the Spirit. God is so closely related to us, or we to him, that he can dwell in us, in the deepest reaches of the self, below the level of awareness. If we open ourselves to him, he can work in us, even though we are not aware of it, to cleanse, heal, strengthen, just where we need it most.

Any adequate Christian psychology must deal with this issue. The popular, self-help variety which is so prevalent in our pulpits is too shallow,

<sup>2</sup> The Westminster Press, 1959, p. 177.

never comes to grips with the real problems, therefore is unconvincing to thoughtful persons and frustrating to troubled persons. A recovery of the full gospel will minister to our contemporary needs as no alternative will.

4. One further fact must be made clear. The price of such indwelling by the Spirit is a complete surrender of one's self to God. There can be no halfway measures here. It is not possible to love God with half a heart. The demand of Christ is clear. And it is equally certain that the Holy Spirit can do nothing for us until we are totally open and yielded to him.

This should give us ministers pause. First of all, we have been satisfied to win our people to half-hearted commitment to the church as a socially-accepted organization. We have diluted the gospel; and as we have weakened its demand, we have weakened its strength. Moreover, it may be that we have settled for less than a total commitment of ourselves. In our own concern for the institution, our own anxiety about status and success, indeed by our own professionalism, we may be cutting ourselves off from the fullest resources and finest fruits of the Spirit. What we preach to our people must be preached to ourselves. The price is the same for us as for them—and the promises the same.

Total surrender to the Spirit is the secret of Christian growth. Such a surrender is certainly more than we can accomplish by our own will. The Spirit himself will work in us to achieve such commitment. Then he will work in us to give the fruits of his presence: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22.)

In the Order for the Admission of Candidates to Full Membership in an Annual Conference of The Methodist Church there is a series of questions which the candidate must answer. One question about which Methodists are frequently apologetic is the second one, "Are you going on to perfection?" Admittedly, the next one makes us hesitate: "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?" This and the next two are searching inquiries into our commitment.

I believe the time has come for us to stop being apologetic about this question concerning perfection. If we are not going on to perfection, then what on earth are we headed for? Should we be embarrassed to affirm that, as God enables us to understand ourselves, we are utterly committed to his purposes for our lives, and that we fully expect him to deepen this commitment? Should we not affirm gladly that we are experiencing and confidently hope to continue to experience the ever-deepening presence and power of his Holy Spirit? And is not this the glad hope which we can extend to our people?

This is a dimension of the Gospel which we have allowed to be obscured, perhaps even lost. In its place, we have the gloomy realism of those who see no hope of improvement in our human lot. And on the other hand, we have the frenzied social enthusiasms of those who cling to the illusion of building the Kingdom. The authentic word of Christian hope is to be found in the promise of the continuing presence and deepening work of the Holy Spirit in the life of those who are receptive to his power and submissive to his purposes.

This may be Methodism's glad word to the other churches and to our troubled contemporaries. The sounding of this word, which our founders took to be one of their distinctive accents in their time, may be the reason for which we have been called to be a part of the Church Universal in this age.

# The Life and Thought of Jacobus Arminius

G. J. HOENDERDAAL

ON OCTOBER 10, 1560, Jacobus Arminius was born in the small Dutch town of Oudewater. Having lost his father at an early age, he was brought up among others by the well-known mathematician Snellius, also of Oudewater. At first he studied for a while at Marburg, but after the Spanish had destroyed his native town—where his mother and all the other members of the family were killed—he returned to Holland and continued his studies at Leyden. Later on the city of Amsterdam sent this very gifted student to Geneva, where he studied under Beza. He returned from Geneva with glowing letters of recommendation, but was already suspect in Amsterdam as a preacher on account of his attitude toward the doctrine of predestination and toward the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. His appointment as professor at Leyden made the Calvinists strongly oppose both his doctrines and his thought. His chief opponent was Gomarus, also a professor at Leyden, with whom he had several exchanges.

On October 19, 1609, he died in the midst of this struggle. His followers defended his theology, however, after his death. Since the struggle soon became partly political, they handed in a *Remonstratie* (Remonstrance) to the States of Holland in 1610. Since then they are still called *Remonstranten*. In 1619 at the Synod of Dordrecht they were banned from the Dutch Church and compelled to form a church of their own, which still exists today as the *Remonstrantse Broederschap* (Remonstrant Brotherhood).

It is rather difficult today to obtain copies of Arminius' works in the original Latin edition. In 1956 the English translation by Nichols and Bagnall was reprinted at Grand Rapids.<sup>1</sup> This year a symposium was held

<sup>1</sup> Arminius, J., *Writings*, tr. from the Latin in 3 volumes, by James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, Baker Book House, 1956. Quotations from Arminius in the present article are from this translation.

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at Amsterdam and Leyden to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his birthday. Speakers of several nationalities gave talks on Arminius' influence on their countries.

Much has been said about Arminius, and many people call themselves Arminians without really having studied the works of Arminius. This paper attempts to present an outline of Arminius' thought.

#### SPECULATIVE OR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY?

In 1603 Arminius, after having served as a minister at Amsterdam for sixteen years, was appointed professor at Leyden. He delivered three inaugural orations, dealing with the "object" of theology, the "author" and "end" of theology, and the "certainty" of theology. The first of these already gives us an insight into Arminius' way of thinking. Here he makes a sharp distinction between a theology which he calls "legalistic" (i.e., a theology based on God as revealed in the Law) and a Christian theology. Deut. 4:12, "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude," holds for the former, which is a theology dealing with the true God and his covenant with man, but not a really Christian theology; for the latter takes into account the fall of man which prevents his obeying God's commandments, and the mercy of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Arminius supports this by many quotations from Paul's letters and the Gospel of St. John. It is striking that in all his works Arminius quotes more from the Epistles and the Gospel of St. John than from the Synoptics. It is equally characteristic that, of the church fathers, he quotes Augustine most.

These reflections on a legalistic and a Christian theology are preceded by a passage which in my opinion is characteristic of his entire way of thinking. He has proposed that the object of theology is God and that theology is, therefore, concerned with the knowledge of God. However, he continues, we have to understand three things. Firstly, we cannot know God in the infinity of his nature. Therefore he has adapted his revelation to our capacities and faculties. Secondly, our mind has to be illuminated by the Holy Ghost if God's Light is to reach us. Thirdly, God does not reveal himself to us only to be known by us, after we have been illuminated by the Holy Ghost, but also to be worshiped by us. For "The theology which belongs to this world is practical and based on faith; theoretical theology belongs to another world and consists of the pure and unclouded vision, as the apostle says 'we walk by faith, not by sight' (2. Cor. 5:7)."

For Arminius theology is a practical study, and he was not the first

to believe as much. In the opening chapters of Calvin's *Institutio* the knowledge of God is described as being involved with faith, and we find here too a warning against pure speculation (*nuda speculatio*). Arminius and his followers subscribed to this view. What is important, however, is that Arminius strongly emphasized the connection between theology and the worship and service of God. When he wrote (almost forty years after Calvin's death), it was necessary to draw attention to the dangers of speculation in theology. In all the works of Arminius this practical, and at the same time devout, form of theology is discernible.

#### PREDESTINATION

Arminius' opposition to the doctrine of predestination held by the second generation of Calvinists, such as Beza (he does not quote Calvin himself in this connection), is related to his practical way of thinking which is very deeply rooted in the Bible. Consequently, he always sees any particular doctrine in the light of the whole message of the gospel, and he does not approve of doctrines based on and defended by a text occurring in an isolated part of the Bible. One must not think that Arminius refuted the doctrine of predestination as such. He, too, talks of God's eternal Decree. He was sufficiently trained in Calvinism to be aware of God's sovereignty and freedom. In his struggle against predestination as defined by Gomarus and his followers, he put the question: "What kind of God is it that predestines?" Is it possible that God created the world out of hatred? No, says Arminius, God's Decree for the world is that he would give his Son Jesus Christ as mediator, redeemer, savior, priest, and king, who was to absolve sin through his death. This shows that Arminius wanted to combat the cruder doctrine of predestination with the help of Christology and the teaching connected with it. God, the disposer, is neither a demon nor fate, but our Father in Christ.

This God is, however, also a just God. He loves the sinner, but he also loves justice. Man may, therefore, not fall into either extreme, viz., into the "recklessness" originating from the idea that God's love of the sinner is so great that his sins will be absolved in any case, or into "despair" originating in man's knowledge that God loves justice, which he (man) lacks. Arminius fears that should the doctrine of predestination be preached in such a manner, people would become reckless and believe that the words "Work for your salvation," prayer, and conversion are without meaning.

We find here an anthropological as well as a christological argument against this latter form of the doctrine of predestination. The former is

intimately connected with the practical bias of his theology. If this pre-destination were to lead to a high degree of quietism, it would be wrong on account of its very consequences. This does not mean that Arminius was an activist. He says with great emphasis that God's mercy is the principle, progress, and consummation of all things. He strongly attacks those who accuse him of Pelagianism. It is, therefore, definitely wrong to think of the struggle between Arminius and Gomarus as a revival of the struggle between Luther and Erasmus.

#### THE FREEDOM OF GOD AND THE FREEDOM OF MAN

Man is God's child, not God's slave. This also means man is reconciled and redeemed by God's mercy and enriched by a new freedom. There is no question of *libero arbitrio* as opposed to *servo arbitrio*, for Arminius in his *Disputatio* clearly states in relation to free will, that man has lost his freedom through the Fall. Previous to that, man had had freedom, because God had given it at the Creation. Once fallen, man became the slave of sin. In this respect Arminius expresses himself as strongly as the Heidelberg Catechism. Fallen man is blind, not capable of knowing God, and considers foolish what is wisdom to God. But if man is endowed with faith through the Holy Ghost, then his whole life begins to flourish and flower, and he knows that he is free; he comes into the light; he is aware of his love for God and is daily renewed. "The former man," however, also remains in him and he therefore has to remain vigilant so that he may not become slack and weaken. For although God confirms and strengthens those whom he has accepted in his mercy, even David and Peter stumbled and wavered. It is clear that the paradox in Phil. 2:12-13, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," cannot be resolved.

It is also clear that a consistent conception of freedom can only tolerate one form of freedom, either the freedom of God or the freedom of man. Two forms of freedom which limit each other are neither of them freedom any longer. Logically there can be only one form of freedom. If this is the absolute freedom of God, then man cannot be anything but a puppet in God's hand, a creature that can only really exist by being endowed with God's mercy. If freedom is man's, then one will have to follow Sartre in denying the existence of God; for what kind of God would it be, who allows himself to be limited by man?

The gospel is here not in accord with logic. Paul knew very well

that God can do what he likes with man, just as a potter can with his clay; yet in the state of grace man is definitely responsible toward God. Otherwise, why should Paul have given so many exhortations in his letters? And what if God offers mercy and man wants to persist in his lack of freedom? There are several testimonies of people who say that God has "battered" them, as it were, that he has overcome all resistance, broken down every obstacle made by man. But are there not many people who prefer to remain far from God's mercy? It is, according to Arminius, "not irresistible." With these words he tries to describe the organic relation between God and man. Mercy is not mechanically infused but offered by God's love.

Arminius took a long time to come to this conviction. Years and years passed in which he preached at Amsterdam and devoted himself to interpreting Romans 9, exchanged many letters with Professor Junius of Leyden, and wrote his objections against the Scottish reformer, Perkins. In the end he was convinced that God's freedom comes first. God gives faith. Man can resist this faith. Whoever accepts faith, whoever is illuminated by the Holy Ghost and accepts the faith, will be chosen. Believers are the true elect. This heresy caused a storm of protest from his adversaries, who taught that we believe simply because we have been elected. . . .

Soon the whole Dutch nation became involved in this dispute. They disputed from the pulpit and in the church, in towboats and in taverns; they accused, they defended; they insinuated and exonerated. The propositions of Arminius and of Gomarus were often confused by much misunderstanding. There were undoubtedly social undercurrents, such as secret opposition to those Arminians who were in power, and the political oppositions within the Dutch Republic, which played a part in this conflict. The main cause was nevertheless religious, and in the first instance consisted in the religious struggle of a man who wrestled to achieve a free child-Father relationship with God—seen in the light of God's sovereign freedom.

#### OF FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

It is clear that for every doctrine and its adherents there must be a favorable environment: a state of affairs which existed in Holland. Before Calvinism there had been those original Dutch reformation movements which went back much further, probably even to Thomas à Kempis, Geert Groote, and their followers. These reformed people were closer to Melanchthon than to Calvin. Holland was a country which had liberated itself from Spanish oppression: the republic was only twenty-five years old when

Arminius appeared on the stage. And he now wanted to establish a free church in this new and free state.

On February 8, 1606, Arminius, as Rector Magnificus (Principal) of the Leyden University, gave a speech on the reconciliation of Christians in their religious quarrels. In this speech Arminius pleaded for an ecumenical church in which the only essential was to be the word of the Holy Scriptures. He looked forward to a union of Lutherans and Mennonites through the possibility of their accepting other confessions such as the Augsburg confession, the Belgic confession, etc. There were in those days movements toward unity among Protestants, which stemmed more particularly from the King of England and the Court of Paltz. But unity can only be achieved on a broader basis. Since articles of faith are the works of men, they are always to be tested and proved against the word of God. In fact they are all "capable of revision and reform." After all, the *confessio belgica* was repeatedly revised, just as those of French churches were.

Nevertheless there was a storm of indignant protest in Dutch churches when Arminius at a preliminary meeting for the coming national synod in 1607 put as an item on the agenda, "The revision of the forms" (articles of faith). Many people objected that revisions could not continually be made without the congregations becoming uncertain and confused. Moreover, they said, if the Bible were to be taken as the basis of the church, it would mean opening the doors to all kinds of extraordinary biblical interpretations—and this had become only too clear from the so-called biblical basis of fanatics such as the Anabaptists! The articles of faith are a sufficient interpretation of the Bible. The Bible has to be explained in terms of these articles. Once more a vicious circle: the Bible and the articles—the one cannot do without the other.

Times had changed. Was not Arminius this time a better Calvinist than his adversaries? For Calvin himself refused to accept any confession as an authority equivalent to the Bible.

Arminius' emphasis on the Bible made him lose sight of the dangers for the unity of the church, should everyone be allowed to interpret the Bible in his own way. He was too convinced of the perspicuity of the Holy Scriptures, which in his view excluded the possibility of misinterpretations. His adversaries went too far in their adherence to the articles, and ran the risk of reducing the gospel merely to these articles and the catechism.

Arminius failed in his attempts. His conception of the church was unpalatable and the articles were in fact established firmly forever. But after the defeat at Dordrecht, Episcopius, Arminius' successor at the Uni-

versity of Leyden (and exiled from Holland in 1619), was to write entirely in the spirit of Arminius in the preface to his own Confession of 1621: "This Confession has no irrefutable authority; it appears to be necessary in times of disturbance and confusion; it offers a beacon to warn people against reefs, sand-banks, rocks and shores."

#### INFLUENCES

In the course of this article I have already pointed to some of the influences affecting Arminius. The chief influence, in my opinion, stems from Geneva. It is, however, well known that in his student days Arminius was very much interested in the new philosophy of Ramus, which was antischolastic. Influences from the Dutch Reformation can also be detected, and even from Melanchthon, rather than from Castellio or Socinus. Arminius' influence on others was also many-sided. There is much doubt as to whether all those who called themselves Arminian really did justice to the man whose name they borrowed. Soon many anti-Calvinists called themselves Arminian. For instance, the term "Arminianism" is found in Anglican circles at the time of the persecution of the Puritans.

But there were others, too. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodists, was Arminian, and confessed as much. Indeed, one common factor was the conception of conversion, which cannot be reconciled with the doctrines of God's irresistible grace and predestination. The influence of Arminianism in America is important, since the coexistence of faith in God's sovereignty and man's responsibility was an integral part of the strength of the pioneers. We can agree with Martin E. Marty's statement in *The Christian Century*,<sup>2</sup> that the American form of faith can be described as that of the Arminian man.

It looks as if our times confront us with completely different problems from those Arminius had to face. Nevertheless the study of seventeenth-century theology is certainly no mere bookish hobby for a few church historians. We come into contact with a living world, and with people fighting for their faith and for their churches, just as we are today. What, after all, are four hundred years in the history of the church? And yet it is dangerous to make too close a comparison. During the course of history, Arminius has been made a Methodist, a Pietist, and a liberal Protestant. He has even been made a "Barthian" (cf. a recent dissertation in America); this is not impossible if we bear in mind the Christocentric element in

<sup>2</sup> Sept. 24, 1958, "The New Man in Religionized America," p. 1073.

Arminius' thought, but whether Barth would allow himself to be called an Arminian is perhaps questionable.

The great differences between seventeenth-century theology and ours lie in our altered conception of the Bible and in the four centuries of Western European and American culture which have affected our climate of thought. Yet at the moment we have reached a turning point in our theology which brings us closer to the seventeenth century. Present-day theology is in certain quarters once more seriously concerned with predestination, election, atonement, and redemption. These connect us with the central problems of the seventeenth century, so it is very rewarding for us to study this period.

## 2. Arminianism in England

OWEN CHADWICK

THE ARMINIANS OF ENGLAND have sometimes been confused with the Arminians of Holland. It is true that Arminius himself owed part of the impulse of his originality to his experience of English Calvinist theology in William Perkins. And there was always a relation of interest and perhaps of mutual influence between the Arminians of Holland and those who thought with them in England. If you go to the University Library at Cambridge, England, you can find a good many manuscripts of the early seventeenth century which show what a keen, eager interest the Cambridge divines of that day took in the controversies which were proceeding in Holland. But, as has sometimes been the way in English religion, the Arminians of England were in no sense a coherent or organized school of theology.

On the whole, indeed, the name Arminian was usually applied to Englishmen, in those early years of the seventeenth century, more as a term of abuse and controversy than as an effort at accurate description. Terms of abuse are often hurled indiscriminately where they do not apply in detail, and as such the term "Arminian" tended to be applied to anybody who did not share the full and authentic Calvinist theology. How loose were the opinions held by the group, commonly known by their opponents as Arminians, may be illustrated from an epigram. About 1635 an English clergyman named George Morley was asked by a friend, who was enquiring into the beliefs of the country, "What is it that Arminians hold?" George Morley replied, "All the best bishoprics and deaneries in England."

The reaction against Calvinism was a European movement. Indeed it was a movement not confined to Protestantism, for the developments of the theology of the Counter Reformation at the end of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth often went beyond normal limits in emphasizing the power of the human will to salvation and the need of the soul to co-operate with grace upon the road to sanctification and to heaven. The perils of the Jesuit theology of grace in the seventeenth century are

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nearly as well known as the perils of their moral theology which Pascal portrayed in the Provincial Letters.

The reaction was in part a philosophical reaction, dependent upon the incoming of a certain Platonic idealism which may be found upon the continent in a philosopher like Descartes, and in England in a philosopher (loosely called Arminian) like Thomas Jackson (1579-1640), or later in the Cambridge Platonists; it can be found in the new spirit of mysticism in a German mystic like Boehme, or in those sects of the left wing of Protestantism which were going to give birth at their best to the Society of Friends. Partly it was a reasoned theological reaction. Calvinism, when it was made rigid and too logical by its third generation of theologians, seemed to force intolerable conclusions upon the Christian heart and conscience, and forced the thinkers to seek genuine grounds for resisting not only the conclusions but the principles and basis on which the conclusions were alleged to rest.

## I

In England the reaction is usually taken to begin in the year 1595, when a young Fellow of Caius College in Cambridge, by name William Barrett, preached a University Sermon in which he denounced the *Satanismus Calvinii*, referred with opprobrium to some of the leading divines of the continent, and argued that the Calvinist doctrines of assurance and predestination bred in the Christian soul a false security and that men should work out their salvation with fear and trembling. There was a public demand in the University that the preacher should retract his sermon, and he was forced into the pulpit to read a recantation. But he read the recantation in so irreverent a manner that the performance was judged unsatisfactory. The attempt to quell the subsequent controversy in the University of Cambridge led the Archbishop of Canterbury, with certain colleagues, to publish the Lambeth Articles of 1595, which are usually taken to mark the summit of Calvinist influence in the Church of England. It is nevertheless evident even in those articles that there was a reluctance to accept the extremer conclusions of Calvinist theology, and it is also evident that from 1595 the latent opposition to Calvinism among English clergymen came out into the open much more readily. In John Overall (1560-1619), in "Dutch" Thomson (died 1613; the nickname is significant of the relation with Holland), in Richardson, the Regius Professor of Divinity from 1607 to 1625 (all three translators or revisers of the Authorized Version), the non-Calvinist school of divinity was beginning to grow, to become conscious of itself and more confident.

The argument at first was theological; in particular it raged over the thorny question whether it is possible for a man who has been once truly converted and has received justifying grace to fall and be lost to salvation. The most difficult point for all Arminian theology, whether in Holland or elsewhere, was to show that a rocklike, absolutely stable faith in God's grace was compatible with a belief that it was possible for the sheep to wander out again on the moor and not be fetched back. There is for example an admirable little book by Dutch Thomson called *De amissione gratiae*. The contention carried with it others—especially that Christ died for all men and not only for the elect. But soon other considerations entered in, apart from the proper interpretation of the scriptural evidence.

It was rapidly found that the confutation of Calvinism demanded a study and consideration, at a fundamental level, of the rightful place of reason in theological thinking and the application of reason, its modes, its limits, to the theological evidence and even the evidence provided by revelation. In the area of church polity and discipline Richard Hooker, in his classical work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, published in 1593-1597, had already laid down the groundwork of a critique on philosophical grounds of the Calvinist exclusion of reason from any place in the expounding and ordering of the data of the revelation. Though Hooker cannot himself be called an Arminian, yet his work was a necessary foundation for the later rational theologians in their endeavors to prove that there is a due place for rational thinking in the realm of religion. Thomas Jackson, the Dean of Peterborough (1597-1640), carried the principle very far indeed. His works on the being and nature and attributes of God are far more metaphysical than they are scriptural, and it is possible that Jackson's work therefore gave Calvinist theologians plenty of grounds for suspecting with some justice what the thinkers whom they so loosely called Arminian were trying to do.

How intimate was the connection in England (as in Holland) between the attack upon Calvinism and the origins of rational theology may be seen in John Hales, the Provost of Eton. Hales had been sent as one of the Anglican representatives to the Synod of Dort in 1618; and as he heard the arguments of Remonstrant or Counter-Remonstrant, he "bade Master Calvin good-night." The subsequent development of his mind seems to have brought him to a strong conviction of the rightful place of rational philosophy in the realm of theology, and made him akin to such an early Deist as Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

With the coming of the Commonwealth, and the period of toleration

which Cromwell's government enforced, the opposition to the Calvinists came into the open. For the history of theology the most significant group is undoubtedly the Cambridge Platonists. If you read a contemporary Calvinist divine and a Cambridge Platonist, they might sometimes hardly be talking the same language. Read for example the memorable correspondence between the Platonist Benjamin Whichcote of King's College, Cambridge, and Anthony Tuckney, the Master of Emmanuel College. Whichcote was contending that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, and seemed to imply by this text that since the mind of man is in some sort a reflection of the divine mind and therefore the reason of human thinking is in some sense an authentic reflection of the reason or *Logos* of God, the reason may be trusted far into metaphysical enquiry. To Tuckney the Calvinist such a contention was not merely unintelligible and unbiblical; it was the ground for the whole structure which he believed to be erroneous. The two men had reached utterly different conclusions in divinity because they were standing upon utterly different foundations and first principles. It must be said that Tuckney's explanations of the Bible are much more biblical than Whichcote's; and yet there is unquestionably something in Whichcote's mingling of mysticism with Christian ethics which represented an authentic element in the Christian tradition, such as the more rigid Calvinists at least had neglected or minimized or undervalued.

## II

With the restoration of King Charles II, the Calvinist tradition in England suffered an almost mortal blow. For it had become (unjustly) associated in many minds, especially the minds of the extreme Royalists, with disloyalty. The King had been cast from his throne and executed, the bishops and the framework of the old Church likewise destroyed, by Scottish Presbyterians and English parliamentarians who often shared similar viewpoints in practical religious matters. And although the New Model Army and the government of Cromwell contained many persons who could not by any stretch of the imagination be described as Calvinists and some of whom were most antagonistic to Calvinism in thought, nevertheless Calvinism had become associated in the minds of loyalists with treason, or at least with unpatriotic behavior, with false views of the relation of Church and state and therefore of the Church.

In the archepiscopate of William Laud, the Arminians had certainly held many bishoprics and deaneries in the kingdom, but they were still a loose group and their numbers, if temporarily influential, were still few.

In his time they had no claim to be the full and authentic tradition of the Church of England. But with the Restoration and the association of Calvinism with Cromwellianism, the little group which had once been part of the Church of England had now become, so it seemed, the authentic representative of the Anglican tradition at its best. It has not always been realized sufficiently how since 1662 the Calvinist or Evangelical tradition has labored in England under the imputation of being not quite an authentic version of the Anglican faith and polity. And in the realm of theology it may be said that increasingly such doctrines as justification by faith alone, the doctrine of assurance, the doctrine of predestination, the doctrine that the elect cannot finally fall from grace, labored under great difficulties and slowly became the beliefs of a minority of convinced persons within the Church of England rather than a common or official exposition of the articles of religion laid down in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

From the middle, therefore, of the seventeenth century you find English divines who were decisively opposed to Calvinist doctrines of grace, and who were holding positions upon justification and sanctification which are not easily distinguishable, at least in their effect, from the doctrines held by the better theologians of the later Middle Ages. One such was Jeremy Taylor. Taylor's anxiety to impress his flocks with the necessity for ardent moral endeavor sometimes led him into language which lays such extreme emphasis on the possibilities of the human will as to seem to warrant a charge of semi-Pelagianism, if not of doing without grace altogether. No doubt this is pastoral language and not to be taken as an accurate statement of a theological position. It is significant that Jeremy Taylor could affirm with confidence the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, really on the grounds that he could affirm the immaculate conception of everyone.

For the theological, as opposed to the devotional, tradition a more significant figure was George Bull, who in 1659 published his *Harmonia Apostolica*. The meaning of the title is this: the Calvinists and the Reformation as a whole had said that we must harmonize St. James in the light of St. Paul, who is so much clearer. Bull argues that on the contrary we must harmonize St. Paul with St. James. With the exception of the doctrine of merit, which he eschews or tries to eschew, Bull's doctrine is really indistinguishable from the doctrine of a semi-Pelagian of the later Middle Ages. He regards justification as a process, that is to say as equivalent to the process which Reformed divines had universally agreed to call sanctification. He allowed rather more place for the preparation of the human soul for conversion than the Calvinists were usually willing to do.

His views caused acrimonious controversy in England; but, as the Calvinists declined, as the Restoration theology seemed to be more and more of the High Church tradition, as rational theology rose to be dominant in all theology during the eighteenth century, the doctrines of justification which were commonly held by most of the leading divines of the Church of England outside the Evangelical movement were doctrines which looked back in some shape or form to the writings of George Bull. The doctrine of justification commonly held among the High Churchmen of the Church of England today, and perhaps among many outside the specially High Church tradition, would look back to such a theology as that of John Henry Newman in his lectures on justification published in 1837, lectures which themselves look back to Bull's theology.

One special instance of a genuine controversy over the Arminian theology must be merely noted. John Wesley shrank from the extreme Calvinists' positions; in his day these were even more extreme than those which, when taught by William Perkins, had so shocked Arminius himself. The controversy between Wesley and the Calvinists of his day has led to that well-known division between Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists. But Wesley himself was much nearer to the authentic tradition of the Reformation than Bull. The Reformation had been reacting against the religion of works. Bull had witnessed religious anarchy and antinomian sects during the Civil War, and his fear was of the failure of moral endeavor. Wesley knew much too much about the Reformation to suppose that the doctrine of justification by faith alone would lead to an absence of moral endeavor. But he was concerned primarily for the true scriptural exposition which, as he believed, the extreme rigidities of the eighteenth-century Calvinism were overthrowing.

The theological tradition represented in its classical form by George Bull taught that Christ died, not only *sufficiently* for all men, but *efficaciously* if they would allow his grace to be efficacious. At the same time these theologians were as anxious as any Protestant to exclude the legalistic notions of merit. How this can be done without contradiction was not always clear; and some people accused Bull of teaching merit under other names (like "entitlement to salvation"). But substantially the English Arminian doctrine rested always upon a denial of any "grace of condignity," or notion that a Christian soul could achieve a state which was worthy of salvation, even if that soul were co-operating in a measure with the grace of God. And with the denial of condignity went an affirmation (though without the name) of what the schoolmen had called "grace of congruity"—

though you could not deserve grace, being always an unprofitable servant, you could prepare yourself in such a manner that it was "fitting" to God's love and mercy that he should pour in his grace. And it was contended that only if such an activity of the human soul were recognized could the reward-texts of the New Testament be allowed their full weight.

Consequently Bull and others looked with less favor than any of their English predecessors upon the doctrine that the good works of the heathen cannot in any sense be regarded as good before God. Article XIII (of works before justification) in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England had declared that works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasant to God—the classical Augustinian doctrine. The rational theologian of the seventeenth century found this the least intelligible of the Articles; and Bull was forced to circumvent it by an open subterfuge, which became traditional among his followers. He separated the title of the article from the contents, and argued that the article did not assert "works before justification" to be not pleasant to God, but only "works done before the grace of Christ"—and that these two were not at all the same thing. The result was to remove all effective meaning from Article XIII.

A further consequence for the English Arminians was sacramental; they needed to make a distinction, sharper than had been usual in Christian thought, between justification and regeneration. They were all believers in that high doctrine of sacramental grace characteristic of the Caroline divines, the doctrine which made them so hostile to the Calvinist belief that the sacramental grace was offered only to the elect. They believed that all baptized infants were already regenerate. But since it was plain to observation that all baptized infants were not yet sanctified, and since their theology of grace was identifying justification with sanctification, they must regard the state of regeneration as the first stage upon the road toward justification. And this caused some confusion, in the long run. For they were so familiar with another, and older, use of "regenerate" to mean "justified," that they sometimes continued to talk about "regenerate men," meaning (not baptized men but) truly converted men.

One of the gravest confusions of English theology was this double use of the word "regenerate," sometimes to mean baptized and sometimes to mean converted. When Dr. Pusey wrote his tracts upon baptism in the *Tracts for the Times* of 1833-41, he produced a mass of patristic evidence for the Fathers' habitual association of regeneration with baptism; but he betrayed no consciousness whatever of a certain ambiguity in English theo-

logical language, and thereby could make no serious contribution to the problem which he desired to treat.

### III

What was the achievement of the Arminians in England, if we may loosely call them Arminians? They made the extremisms of Calvinism the beliefs of a minority within the Church. Though they were less successful in framing a coherent alternative, they had the negative merit of demonstrating that Calvinism could not successfully claim to be the only warrantable exegesis of the scriptural evidence. They were deeply concerned for the moral growth of the Christian soul; and though it must be recognized how they inherited much moral theology and casuistry from their Calvinist predecessors, yet works like Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* became little classics of devotion and of growth in the saintly life—classics with a spirit, an ethos, an atmosphere far sundered from that of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and yet recognizable as also in the authentic mind of the Christian church. They taught a more "objective" view of the nature of sacramental grace, and succeeded in rooting this view in the theological soil, so that without them the sacramental revival in the Oxford Movement would probably have been unthinkable. And they wished to draw men's minds away from the controversies over *sola fide* and predestination, in which theologians seemed to have become immersed as in a morass; to turn them to a certain agnosticism about the mysteries hidden within God's eternal purpose; and to concern themselves with the practical business of the Christian life, how a man may best allow the grace of God to work in his own life for goodness.

# Higher Education and Values

NELS F. S. FERRÉ

THE CRISIS OF OUR TIMES is the crisis of values. Harvard anthropologist Kluckhohn is only one strong voice in a mighty chorus thundering this truth. Values indicate how we try to meet our needs. Human needs are what human nature requires. Our basic needs are universal to human nature. Human needs, as Rignano observed long ago, are also the expression of the necessity for human beings to be in the right relationship to their environment. They are in fact elicited by that environment. Therefore human needs reflect, beyond their own nature, the nature of the reality that produced them. The understanding of what human values are, consequently, involves the interpretation and the evaluation of what is beyond man. Inasmuch as religion is man's evaluative response to reality at its center, or as a totality, or, to use Tillich's terms, as it concerns us ultimately, the right religious response offers the answer to our crisis of values. What chance is there, however, that the nature of such a response can be established; and if established, made?

Higher education is itself in a state of crisis. It is, at least, undergoing drastic re-examination. Many of those responsible for charting its course are in a flexible mood. They are ready for change. Development requires reappraisal, the discarding of unfortunate features of present practice and the discovery and incorporation of new methods and contents. For such constructive change there is great pressure. One force for change is the inescapable fact of failure on the part of our present kind of democratic way of life to meet the demands of a new era, within and without. In a major educational television series scheduled for autumn, 1959, for instance, in which outstanding Americans weighed the strength of our national life in its major areas, there was a frightening consensus as to our coming short of the requirements of our day. Such searching judgment, however, can also be the proper prelude to a new fulfillment. A second force for the renewal of higher education is the focus of attention and

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of effort which is now put upon it all the way from our federal government and secular agencies to the National Council of Churches and separate denominations. Our present topic, "Higher Education and Values," therefore combines two main areas of concern.

In order to furnish a constructive approach to the subject, I shall concentrate our discussion on three areas of need: the trusting of truth; the freedom of fulfillment; and the creation of community.

## I

The thrust of Western civilization originated in the trusting of truth. For the Hebrews such faith meant obeying the Source of trust, the living God. He was the author of dependable order. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Is not his judgment the plumbline of righteousness? The authors of the Books of Kings were the first historians of note; and for them history exhibited the faithfulness of God in punishing the wicked rulers and their nations and the rewarding of the righteous. For the Greeks also the trusting of truth underlay their rise to creative civilization from Parmenides' equating of thought and being through various approaches to the trustworthiness of reason, like Anaxagoras' identifying mind and reality, up to the magnificent systems of Plato and Aristotle. With the Greeks it was reason and natural knowledge that delivered them from bondage to fate or from the fickleness of the gods. For the Hebrews, the trusting of truth was mainly obedience to a faithful God; for the Greeks, such trusting was largely the acceptance of the regularities in thought and nature disclosed by reason.

The strength of the Hebrew and Greek heritages combined to provide the proper precondition for the rise of art, culture, and science in the Middle Ages. Both history and nature were dependable orders under God and according to the laws of nature. Saint Augustine's *The City of God* gave main focus to Western man's thought concerning the meaning of history up through the Middle Ages, and Roger Bacon formulated an early statement of man's trusting God's faithfulness in nature. Within such an outlook, intellectual, esthetic, and scientific creativity burst forth.

Such faith in truth, however, was soon assailed. In effect Newton reduced the historical order to the natural, thus helping to destroy faith in the God of history. Hume separated both orders from the truth of pure reason, reserving truth for logic and pure mathematics, and introducing a radical skepticism as to any dependable and significant knowledge in the other realms. Instead of the knowledge of history and of nature belonging

together under God and according to reason, there was for him no certain knowledge of either, especially not as whole. More and more, thereafter, knowledge began to disintegrate into fragments of special sciences to the point where, as in modern linguistic philosophy, only abstract analytical meaning carried certainty, while this realm itself became totally divorced from the realm of fact, and all facts were relegated by rigid methodological rules to the special sciences. In other cases, the unity underlying history and nature, if attempted at all, became stated in terms of myths and symbols so loosely and thinly related to reality that they clouded the mind and lamed the will. Alasdair MacIntyre, a front-line linguistic analyst on the Third Programme of the B.B.C., told us himself that no civilization can be creative apart from some overarching metaphysics, some great unifying world view and integrated set of values; but, he says, we do not know how to go about finding and relying on such truth.

We need, indeed, to return to a trusting of truth in both areas of history and nature. But such a return seems nearly impossible. We cannot will it. Mere reason is impotent to provide basic faith. What hope is there, then, for a new creative era to match the unprecedented demand of our day?

Our deepest need, we recall, indicates the nature of reality. Our evaluative response should therefore be in line with our deepest need as men. Clemens E. Benda, in his significant work, *Der Mensch im Zeitalter der Lieblosigkeit*, has pointed out that from within a false evolutionary presupposition we have defined need in the direction of what lies below man. Man's animal needs, so to speak, for physical survival and satisfaction have been made central—food, sex, and shelter; whereas man cannot be understood except on his own level, as a person and a society in need most centrally of love. The Harvard Research Center in Altruistic Integration and Creativity, under Pitirim A. Sorokin, has amassed evidence to support this contention, and some social scientists are convinced that this is the generation that has discovered love as the context for the investigation of human behavior.

However significant such inquiry and such statement may be for theory, indicating right evaluative responses to reality as being centrally Love, the Hebrew-Christian approach to Love through acceptance and obedience is nevertheless the only way to know Love as the power to transform life and to make possible the trusting of truth in history. If God is Love and if Love to be known must be obeyed, a century of lawlessness, crime, and wanton destruction in war should make it almost impossible

for this generation to know him, at least impossible apart from genuine repentance and a change of ways. Only by the doing of the truth, and even by the being of it, can truth be trusted; otherwise it has to be known mainly by the breach of it as sterility, futility, and sense of guilt and meaninglessness.

Such obedience in history, however, cannot ever take the place of trusting the truths of reasoned experiment in nature. The faithfulness of God in nature underlies the unity of the universe which is the basic presupposition of science. The method of science is a sign of the trusting of truth. Higher education to get full focus on the truths of history and of nature that can support and produce basic values must rediscover a way to place our culture under obedience to God and under respect for reason, until combining and developing our Christian and our Greek heritages, we shall receive that sensitiveness to what is vital that shall let the values arising from our deepest needs spring once again to creative and robust life.

## II

Besides the trusting of truth, a syndetic value is the freedom of fulfillment. No higher education can succeed if it fails to release the kind of freedom that is the foundation of a large cluster of secondary values like responsibility, initiative, and creativity. Our American culture has been cradled in liberty, nurtured in initiative, and should mature in creative responsibility.

The denial of man's freedom is by now an old story. Our attention, however, has usually been focused on the institutional and social denial of freedom. We have become increasingly aware of political totalitarianism and cultural conformism. Higher education, however, has contributed its share to freedom's lack. By its absorption with the objective fields in the curriculum, whether in the natural or in the social sciences, higher education has turned man himself into an object. The social sciences, of course, should study man both as an object and a subject. But as a "subject" in the curriculum the social sciences placed man under the control of predictable conditions, purporting to study the whole man but actually reducing him to an object. Then philosophy, in large sections of its domain, as Tillich pointed out in his Lowell Lectures (Boston, 1958), reduced the subject of man's thinking and man respectively to a matter of linguistic analysis and to a sheer object for scientific verification.

Existentialism came as a revolt to this objectification of man. Søren Kierkegaard choked under the suffocating systems that made man an object.

For him subjectivity was truth, and choice the only road to reality. Existentialism has now become a movement of revolt in literature and drama, as well as in philosophy and theology. Central to this movement is its demand that man recognize his inescapable freedom. Such stress is one step on the return to reality, but most of the movement is guilty of the perversion or of the belittling of freedom. The freedom advocated by existentialism for the most part is man's immature freedom of self-expression. Such freedom is rooted in man, not in his evaluative response to reality. Because it has no recourse to the conditions of the freedom of fulfillment, modern existentialism nearly always fails to find God through whom truth can be trusted both for history and for nature. Freedom therefore becomes largely the despairing responsibility of a faithless generation.

The only adequate answer to existentialism is the fulfillment of its demand for the centrality of choice by the discovery of the kind of reality where choice is not only real and responsible but capable of individual and social fulfillment. If freedom itself is not optional, as the existentialists rightly observe, the road to reality must lie through freedom. When freedom is conceived of as primarily for the self, there is no realm of reality in terms of which the freedom of the self can be fulfilled. Freedom becomes meaningless and frustrating. The reason existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre find all roads leading equally nowhere is that the goal toward which they start is already the self. They have nowhere to go with their freedom!

The freedom of self, at the least, must lie in our common humanity. Man must be an object of allegiance. Instead of other people "being hell," as Sartre dramatizes in *No Exit*, a fact for those who make their own freedom both ground and goal, other people should become understood and experienced as essential to self-fulfillment. Christianity and Hinduism join in affirming that other people rightly understood and accepted are part of our own body, not to be hated but to be loved. Heidegger has expanded *existenziell*, or individual human nature, into *existenzial*, or common human nature. This way lies the truth of right existentialism. Freedom is real and decision is central both to knowledge and to reality, not as the freedom of the limited and the isolated self, but as the freedom of the inclusive, social self. The glory of man is the glory of his common humanity; the responsibility of man is the inescapable freedom of man in the human community.

Even as self-fulfillment comes through the acceptance of others, moreover, in the grace of both common receiving and responsible doing, so the

freedom of fulfillment comes only through the reaching of reality. Man's freedom is inescapably bound up with God's freedom, whose freedom is that of creative concern for the common good. Man is not alone even in the frightful choices of this day, except as he repudiates his Maker. Our own freedom is authentic, for it is the gift of a faithful God, but it need not become the freedom of frustration except as we ignore or defy the common good. We may have, for the receiving and the living of it, the freedom of fulfillment where freedom for self-fulfillment is liberated within co-operative community and man's basic need for love is lifted up into the reaches of the ultimate reality of the freedom of God. A basic task for higher education, especially in our day of frustrating and dehumanizing conformism, is to discover as well as to defend, to enlarge as well as to perpetuate, to sensitivize as well as to make available, the total range of freedoms in all areas of life without which man neither knows nor attains authentic existence.

### III

The trusting of truth should lead to the fulfillment of freedom both by a larger view of God and by the acceptance of his universal will and also by the fuller exploration and use of the natural order for the common good. For these values, as our evaluative response to reality at the center of our common need, are themselves consummated by the concern for community. It is unnecessary for our purposes to paint in large the conflict of our age between the surviving drives of a profane individualism and an obscene collectivism. Both are sins against God, for whatever else the Christian doctrine of the Trinity may mean, at its center it proclaims the truth of God's identifying himself conclusively with the individual in the Son, and with the community in the Spirit. In the biblical teaching one cannot be had apart from the other. Man is neither free nor full apart from the self-acceptance which involves altogether the acceptance of the total human community under God.

To be sure, such community must begin at home. The wise know that the world will be changed in the family and that a new age must begin in the local community. There are those who grow eloquent concerning the breaking down of barriers and the building of bridges on the world-wide scale because they cannot govern themselves, have failed in their own family life, and are irresponsible in the concrete instances of social need. Beyond this obvious requirement of authentic life at home, however, there are three areas of critical demand calling for the creation of community: race, nation, and religion.

Whether in South Africa or in the Southern United States, whether in London or in Fort Wayne, racial strife comes as a curse because it expresses as well as symbolizes man's revolt against God. God created us with the glory of diversity; we fear what is different and defame God's glory. For the problem of race there is no easy solution because it is not only rooted in our primitive passions, but also intertwined with our relation to God. The only adequate solution for it is the power of God who created, contagious with the richness of our common humanity. Once when I was invited to address a Law School in the South, as I opened my Bible my eye happened to fall on two verses across the page from each other: "The (law) courts are open" and "They (the disciples) were filled with the Holy Spirit." The values of God's diversity in creation by racial variety can become understood and appropriated only when the meaning and purpose of both law and love become effective in a new level of humanity. Higher education fails both God and man unless it can produce the power for the living of a new age in racial relations.

As our response to race indicates our fear of creative diversity, so our response to the urgent need for supernational loyalties and arrangements witnesses to our limiting God to national regions. We have failed of the maturation that is now needed to keep pace with God's present summons. Nations have had their needed day as the largest practical unity of human organization, possessive of effective sanctions. Some kind of world federation, keeping intact such regional and national freedoms as are consistent with, and enriching of, the common good, will have to come if the world is not to perish by its own hand, or at least not to bleed itself into ignoble and blasphemous impotence. Norman Cousins has prophesied the likely ending of our course of history, unless man can rise with necessary speed from the age of barbarism, symbolized by war, to the age of civilization, symbolized by a new level of co-operative living. No education is high, let alone higher, unless it include as a contagious passion and a sober responsibility the values of one world in international relations.

As our negative response to race, furthermore, rejects God's riches in diversity, and our isolating or insolent response to nation indicates our limiting in our loyalties the effective reign of God, even so, our encountering of other religions is all too often an escape from the universality of God. Symmachus long ago, in discussing the relation of religion, informed Saint Ambrose that "so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only," and recently Dean Inge has reminded us that there are many paths leading to the hill of the Lord and that the paths converge

only at the top. Modern humanity has no choice except to face the fact that the world's religions will confront each other either for conflict or for fulfillment. If Christ, as the Christians claim, is the symbol and the substance of God's universal love, Christians should surely understand and accept all religions at their best, working out with them, humbly and patiently, the common destiny of the many roads which men have started toward the hill of the Lord. There need be no guess that as they do so they will discern much new beauty and learn not a little of God's way in history and in nature. Higher education dare not, on the penalty of sin against humanity as well as against God, accept any longer what Ruth Benedict considers the absolutes of anthropological in-groupism rather than the true universal of a common humanity under God, united by its common need for universal love and creative community.

#### IV

Higher education today confronts, at the center of its task of reconstruction, the nature and place of value. The crises of both civilization and of higher education converge here. If our analysis is right, the solution for both areas can come only as we learn to trust the truth, to find the freedom of fulfillment, and to release the creation of community. The trusting of truth requires the doing of truth. The will of God for the common good must be obeyed if it is to be convincingly known. Upon such doing of truth the reliability of reason as a total context for the study of nature will once again begin to be restored to us. Upon such doing the truth depends also the finding of the freedom of fulfillment which makes the self whole, and releases the deeper freedom of our common humanity within the overarching reaches of God's concern for the total good. And the crowning glory of such trusting of truth and freedom of fulfillment will be the creation of community from the family circle of the local home to the whole family of God, in race, in world order, and in the richly diversified reaches of religion for one world.

The attention of our nation today is on our leaders of higher education as they not only inquire into the nature of value but labor to release the most authentic values both to satisfy our common need and to whet our appetites for that fuller craving for what is good that lies at the center of what is best called the truly human.

# Demythologizing and Jesus

THOMAS J. J. ALTIZER

## I

THE REVOLUTION in Protestant theology which followed the first World War was in part motivated by a reaction against the historical discoveries of Weiss and Schweitzer—which identified the eschatological form of the primitive gospel. Largely through the influence of Karl Barth, theologians tended to lift the Kingdom of God above time and to replace the eschatological future with an eternal or recurrent Now. Barth could write in the preface to the second German edition of his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1921): “If I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the ‘infinite qualitative distinction’ between time and eternity.”<sup>1</sup> The consequences of this position are evident in Barth’s “existential” eschatology:

The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event, no legendary ‘destruction’ of the world; it has nothing to do with any historical, or ‘telluric,’ or cosmic catastrophe. The End of which the New Testament speaks is really the End; so utterly the End, that in the measuring of nearness or distance our nineteen hundred years are not merely of little, but of no importance; so utterly the End that Abraham already saw the Day—and was glad. Who shall persuade us to depress into a temporal reality what can be spoken of only in a parable?<sup>2</sup>

For Barth, the eternal Moment does not enter in, it is eternally present (Barth has since repudiated this position). Emil Brunner was persuaded that he had removed the “scandal” of eschatology by his insistence that eschatological time is qualitative rather than quantitative—“existential-decisive” rather than historical-chronological.

The “soon” of the eschatological hope cannot be expressed in the terms used to describe mathematical astronomical conceptions. . . . Seriousness and “soon” are indissolubly connected. The “soon” is an intensive quality, that is, it increases with

<sup>1</sup> Quoted and translated by Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Existentialists and God*. The Westminster Press, 1956, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Barth, Karl, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 500.

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the increasing seriousness of God. The chronological "soon" and the truly historical "soon" cannot be compared. Where God is truly known, there at the same time the speedy coming of His Kingdom is recognized.<sup>3</sup>

So pervasive was this approach to the meaning of biblical eschatology, that in 1938 an official theological commission of the Church of England could report: "The spiritual value of the eschatological drama is best grasped when it is understood, not as a quasi-literal description of a future event, but as a parable of the continuous and permanent relation of the perpetually imminent eternal order to the process of events in time."<sup>4</sup>

Understandably enough, biblical scholars tended to hold themselves aloof from a theological movement which largely negated or transformed the historical foundation and meaning of the New Testament. Thus in 1931 H. D. Wendland could declare: "Any theology which minimizes the element of the future and the end-time in the concept of eschatology departs from the outlook of faith of the New Testament."<sup>5</sup> Yet ten years later a New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann, initiated the movement of "demythologizing" the gospel. It must first be noted that Bultmann's own book on Jesus (published in 1926) had presented a Barthian-existential view of the eschatology of Jesus. His later work represents a left-wing movement within Barthianism which draws together an historical understanding of the New Testament with an existential presentation of the meaning of the gospel.

Bultmann fully accepts the Weiss-Schweitzer demonstration of the apocalyptic-eschatological foundation of the original message of Jesus. But he believes that the eschatological element in the gospel is a part of a primitive form which must be rejected as mythological, prescientific, and untenable today. The gospel was originally enclosed in a world view which presupposed a three-story universe (heaven, earth, and hell), a cosmic conflict between God and Satan, and a future world-catastrophe leading to a new age. None of these beliefs can be reconciled with a scientific world view. However, none of them is intrinsically related to the deepest meaning of the gospel. The modern Christian must strip the gospel of this external form. Therein he will follow the example of the Gospel of John which spiritualized the eschatology of the Synoptics (Bultmann believes that the Fourth Gospel is the most faithful to the intention of Jesus).

Bultmann has defined Christian belief as "the taking of man out of

<sup>3</sup> Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon, The Westminster Press, 1947, p. 421 n.

<sup>4</sup> *Doctrine in the Church of England*, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted and translated by Amos N. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teachings of Jesus*. Harper & Brothers, 1950, p. 46.

the world and his ingrafting into eschatological existence.”<sup>6</sup> Faith is turning away from the world, the act of desecularization, the surrender of every security. Bultmann believes that this understanding of faith is embodied in the Fourth Gospel.

As an overcoming of the offence and as a decision against the world faith is desecularization, transition into eschatological existence. In the midst of the world the believer is lifted out of secular existence—though he is still “in the world,” he is no longer “of the world” (17:11, 14, 16). He has already gone through the Judgment and gone over into Life (3:18; 5:24f.). He already has Death behind him (8:51; 11:25f.); he already has Life (3:36; 6:47; I Jn. 5:12).<sup>7</sup>

Eschatology as a time-perspective has dropped out with John “because he has so radically transposed eschatological occurrence into the present.”<sup>8</sup> The Kingdom in John has lost its future and apocalyptic elements and become a present and spiritual reality. Inasmuch as John has employed Hellenistic and Gnostic categories in his work of “spiritualizing” the gospel, Bultmann feels no compunction about using twentieth-century existentialism as a medium through which to present a modern gospel. Significantly enough Bultmann has not deviated from his original position of adopting an existential interpretation of New Testament eschatology. His later work has simply demonstrated that this process demands a “demythologizing” of the gospel in the spirit of the Gospel of John.

Christian theologians of various schools and traditions are at one in their effort to “spiritualize” or modernize the eschatology of Jesus and the primitive church. Now that it is no longer possible to deny the presence of eschatology in the original gospel, it has become almost a universal practice to translate ancient eschatological symbols into ecclesiastical or modern categories. Of course, this practice has been in existence ever since the writing of the Fourth Gospel. But now its practitioners are on the defensive. Efforts to maintain that the imminence of the eschatological event is no more than an expression of the intensity of faith, that eschatology is merely a temporal representation of an eternal meaning and value, or that eschatological faith is simply an incontrovertible assurance that God will act, must all be recognized as modernizations of the gospel which are far removed from the ecstatic faith of the early Christians. It is the incomparable merit of Bultmann to have faced this situation with candor and

<sup>6</sup> Bultmann, Rudolf, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. James C. G. Grieg. The Macmillan Company (S.C.M.), 1956, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Bultmann, Rudolf, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955, Vol. II, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 79.

integrity. Therein he has shown that virtually the whole body of modern theologians is engaged in the practice of "demythologizing" the Bible. Bultmann has accepted this truth, has recognized that it entails a theological method of a radical sort, and has then proceeded to reconstruct the whole gospel in the spirit of this method. Thus, Bultmann punctured the Achilles' heel of the Barthian school by raising the long-suppressed historical question—thereby revealing that the Barthians were engaged in a process of modernization which was just as radical as that of their liberal opponents.

## II

It is highly significant that the "spiritualization" of eschatology which occurred in both the ancient and the modern church issued in either a transformation or a negation of the person as well as the message of Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel, Ignatius, and the second-century Fathers, a Hellenistic conception of mystical and sacramental redemption through union with Jesus as the Incarnate Word wholly replaced the Jewish-eschatological expectation of redemption which underlay the Synoptic Gospels. Whether or not this process took place under the influence of Gnostic redemption patterns, it succeeded in obliterating the eschatological form of the primitive gospel and therein transformed Jesus from an eschatological prophet to a savior god. Attention centered upon Jesus as the Incarnate Lord rather than Jesus as the coming Son of Man. Redemption occurred in the present through belief in Jesus, the sacraments mediated the mystical presence of Jesus, and Jesus himself soon came to assume the form of a cosmic Logos.

So likewise modern theology has tended to transform the person of Jesus into a mysterious Word. If Protestant liberalism projected a modern ethical hero into the ancient figure of Jesus, Protestant "dialectical" theology has made of Jesus a disembodied Word, an unknown "x." Jesus is detached from history and viewed as an "existential" Word.<sup>9</sup> The following statement of Karl Barth is typical of this position:

The revelation which is in Jesus, because it is the revelation of the righteousness of God, must be the complete veiling of His incomprehensibility. In Jesus, God becomes veritably a secret: He is made known as the unknown, speaking in eternal silence; He protects Himself from every intimate companionship and from all the impertinence of religion.<sup>10</sup>

The implications of this modern existential approach to the meaning of Jesus (which closely parallels the mystical approach of the ancient

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Wilder, Amos N., *Otherworldliness and the New Testament*, Harper & Brothers, 1954, pp. 72-83.

<sup>10</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 98.

Gnostics) are most apparent in the controversial Christology of Paul Tillich.

Jesus is the religious and theological object as the Christ and only as the Christ. And he is the Christ as the one who sacrifices what is merely "Jesus" in him. The decisive trait in his picture is the continuous self-surrender of Jesus who is Jesus to Jesus who is the Christ. . . . A Christianity which does not assert that Jesus of Nazareth is sacrificed to Jesus as the Christ is just one more religion among many others.<sup>11</sup>

However, Bultmann's treatment of Jesus is more relevant to the present analysis.

For Bultmann, Jesus in his own person signifies the demand for decision. The unity of the eschatological and the ethical message of Jesus may be so stated: "Fulfilment of God's will is the condition for participation in the salvation of His Reign."<sup>12</sup> But Jesus' imperatives are meant radically as an absolute demand with a validity independent of the temporal situation of the End. The eschatological proclamation and the ethical demand direct man to the fact that he is thereby brought before God; "both direct him into his Now as the hour of decision for God."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the essential thing about the eschatological message of Jesus is the idea of God and of human existence which it contains—not the belief that the end of the world is at hand.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the prophets, Jesus directed his preaching to individuals and not to a community. Therefore Jesus "de-historicized" God and man: "that is, released the relation between God and man from its previous ties to history."<sup>15</sup> Again, in contrast to Judaism, Jesus "historicized" God by "desecularizing" man.

For Jesus, however, man is de-secularized by God's direct pronouncement to him, which tears him out of all security of any kind and places him at the brink of the End. And God is "de-secularized" by understanding His dealing eschatologically; He lifts man out of his worldly ties and places him directly before His own eyes. Hence, the "de-historicization" or "desecularization" both of God and of man is to be understood as a paradox (*dialektisch*): precisely that God, who stands aloof from the history of nations, meets each man in his own little history.<sup>16</sup>

Here it is apparent that Bultmann is engaged in the process of demythologizing through his translation of biblical eschatological categories into the categories of modern existential theology.

Insofar as the church believed that Jesus was the Messiah, it proclaimed Jesus himself as the essential content of its message. The church

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago University Press, 1951, Vol. I, pp. 134-135.

<sup>12</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

remained within the framework of Jewish eschatology by looking upon Jesus as the coming Son of Man (Bultmann believes that in primitive Christianity the Parousia was an advent and not a return). And despite the fact that Jesus' preaching was directed against Jewish legalism, "its content is nothing else than the true Old Testament-Jewish faith in God radicalized in the direction of the great prophets' preaching."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the early church was an eschatological sect within Judaism whose special character was provided by its message that Jesus was the Messiah-Son of Man. "Indeed, that is the real content of the Easter faith: God has made the prophet and teacher Jesus of Nazareth Messiah!"<sup>18</sup>

In the Gospel of John, the external husk of primitive Christian eschatology is cast aside and the message of Jesus is presented through the mythical form of Hellenistic Gnosticism. But, here, too, the mythical form is not essential to the message. Jesus is not a mystical teacher in this Gospel, for: "He does not communicate anything, but calls men to himself."<sup>19</sup> The Fourth Gospel has compressed the salvation-drama of the early eschatological myth into a single event: the revelation of God's "reality" in the earthly activity of Jesus combined with the overcoming of the "offense" in it by the believer's accepting it in faith.<sup>20</sup> Here the works of Jesus are his words. But these words never convey anything specific or concrete about God; they are assertions about himself: "for his word is identical with himself."<sup>21</sup> "Thus it turns out in the end that Jesus as the Revealer of God reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer."<sup>22</sup> The Gospel of John presents only the fact and not the content of the revelation.

Fanciful as Bultmann's interpretation of the Fourth Gospel may appear, it is significant as an indication of Bultmann's own position. Friedrich Gogarten has asked: "In the existential interpretation of the New Testament message, has the bridge between the historical Jesus and the preached Jesus collapsed?" "Has the kerygma replaced the person of Jesus?"<sup>23</sup> The answer—which Gogarten labors to oppose—would nevertheless appear to be yes. Bultmann himself has said that Jesus "meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else."<sup>24</sup> Jesus as the Word is Jesus

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> Gogarten, Friedrich, *Demythologizing and History*, trans. Neville Horton Smith. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955, p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> Bultmann, Rudolf, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. by Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller. The Macmillan Company (S.P.C.K.), 1957, p. 41.

as the redemptive event which makes faith possible. Therefore, Jesus comes from "eternity" and his origin is not a human or a natural one.<sup>25</sup> Jesus as the Word is the vehicle through which God speaks to man. For the "redemptive event" constitutes the significance of the history of Jesus. Thus, the real Jesus—the Jesus of faith, the existential Jesus—is identical with the Word. It would seem that the transformation of an eschatological into an existential faith has necessitated the transformation of the historical Jesus into an existential Word.

Rudolf Otto is perhaps the safest guide to the historical-religious meaning of the message and person of Jesus. Otto points out that the records about Jesus are typical of the religio-historical genus in being of a "hagiological" character.<sup>26</sup> Jesus appears in the Synoptics as a "charismatic" type, who is possessed of the charismatic gift and power of healing and exorcism. But these are not the powers of a mere miracle-working rabbi, nor even of a mere prophet. In Jesus they are the operations of the power of the dawning Kingdom of God. The power of the Spirit which was present in Jesus was the power of the eschatological order itself which was "working in advance." This is the very mystery which "Jesus proclaimed, felt, and knew to be working in himself, *viz.*, the kingdom."<sup>27</sup> The early church remained in continuity with the ministry of Jesus insofar as it was an eschatological-charismatic community—as Windisch remarks, only one step is required to pass from the pneumatic Jesus to the Messiah.<sup>28</sup> But the transition from primitive Christianity to the Hellenistic Catholic Church marks the abandonment of the church's charismatic quality as well as its eschatological message. Otto concluded his great work on the eschatology of Jesus with these pregnant words: "That this church lost its 'charisma,' that men look back to it as a thing of past times, that men make it and the inbreaking kingdom belonging to it trivial by allegories, does not show that this church is now on a higher level, but is a sign of its decay."<sup>29</sup>

### III

All efforts to abandon, spiritualize, or demythologize the eschatology of Jesus and the primitive church must be recognized as perilous inasmuch as they invariably lead to a transformation or negation of both the person

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> Otto, Rudolf, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, trans. Floyd V. Filson and Bertram Lee Woolf. Lutterworth Press, 1943, p. 333.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Otto, *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

and the message of Jesus himself. Nothing could more forcefully demonstrate the intimate relation between the person and the message of Jesus, between Jesus the prophet-Messiah and Jesus the Word. Christologies which are noneschatological lose not only the Jewish-biblical roots of Christianity but abandon the historical Jesus as well. The Christian way is an eschatological way; when it ceases to be such it loses all contact with the original proclamation of Jesus.

We can sense the importance of this truth in contrasting the Christian message with the position of Judaism. For it was the eschatological expectation which soon came to distinguish Christianity from rabbinic Judaism. The Jewish theologian, Martin Buber, has beautifully captured this distinction: "The Torah addresses the constant nature of man and summons him to the elevation granted to him, to the highest realization of his relationship with God which is possible to him as a mortal being; Jesus on the other hand, as represented by Matthew, means to summon the elect in the catastrophe of humanity to come as near to God as is made possible to it only in the catastrophe."<sup>30</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls men to that absolute fulfillment of the Torah which is possible to them only through their possession of the eschatological-charismatic powers of the End. Whether we call these ethics "kingdom" ethics or "interim" ethics, they are eschatological through and through. And when the eschatological foundation of the gospel passes into abeyance, the absolute quality of the ethical demand becomes compromised with the "world." For the eschatological hope provides the power of the gospel.

That great "enemy" of Jesus, Friedrich Nietzsche, believed that Jesus was a "free spirit"—who did not care for anything solid. "If I understand anything about this great symbolist, it is that he accepted only inner realities as realities, as 'truths'—that he understood the rest, everything natural, temporal, spatial, historical, only as signs, as occasions for parables."<sup>31</sup> Jesus' eschatological proclamation represents an instinctive hatred of every reality. And genuine Christianity is the ultimate form of rebellion, the absolute form of self-negation.

The Christian conception of God—God as god of the sick, God as a spider, God as spirit—is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low-water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being its trans-

<sup>30</sup> Buber, Martin, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Antichrist*, XXXIV, trans. Walter Kaufmann. *The Portable Nietzsche*, The Viking Press, 1954, p. 607.

figuration and eternal Yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature, against the will to live! God—the formula for every slander against “this world,” for every lie about the “beyond!” God—the deification of nothingness, the will to nothingness pronounced holy!<sup>32</sup>

Yet, Nietzsche believed that it was just this rebellion against reality which made love possible. In love man endures more, man bears anything—but only through the transfiguring power of illusion.<sup>33</sup> Only through a process of absolute self-negation could sacrificial love become a reality. It is this love which seeks out the sick, the weak, the broken ones of this world—and precisely because it is a rebellion against the “reality” of the world. Thus, only a pagan affirmation of life and the world (Nietzsche believed that pagans are all those who say Yes to life) can make possible a “noble” ethics of self-assertion, a free expression of the will to power. The ethics of the gospel is an absolute reversal of this “noble” morality: it is a declaration of “holy war” against the world.

Charles Williams is representative of the dominant Christian tradition in declaring that “the conversion of time by the Holy Ghost” is the title of the “grand” activity of the church.<sup>34</sup> The original Christian proclamation had revolved about the advent of a temporal “now” which would soon be consummated by a temporal “then.” The “now” and the “then” were two foci of one eschatological event. But the absorption of Hellenistic religious patterns into the life of the Church brought about an elevation of the “now” into an all-consuming sacred event—thus bringing about a separation of the “now” and the “then,” and thereby dooming the “then” to a position of secondary and then irrelevant importance. It was this transformation of the original Christian “time-scheme” which made possible the “conversion of time.” The New Testament dialectic between present and future was transformed into a dialectic between this world and the “Beyond,” between time and eternity. Time became converted to Christ insofar as the Messiah-Son of Man was lifted out of his message and ingrafted into the image of a Hellenistic mystery god. A world-reality to which Jesus had been supremely indifferent—indeed, which he had willed to end—was sanctified “in his name.”

It is true that Jesus brought a decisive meaning to the present moment. But he did this only by relating the present moment to the coming end. As Theo Preiss has insisted, “time now has a deep radiating reality only

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, p. 585-586.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XKIII, p. 591-592.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, Charles, *The Descent of the Dove*, Living Age Books, 1956, p. 15.

insofar as it is Christo-centric."<sup>35</sup> But "Christo-centric" must mean directed to the coming Son of Man—not related to a timeless Logos—if it is to remain in continuity with the message of Jesus. This continuity was lost when the time-eternity dialectic replaced the eschatological dialectic of the early Christians.

Christianity succumbed to a this-worldly and ultimately irreligious paganism in its positive evaluation of life. For, contrary to Nietzsche's analysis, it partially absorbed a "Dionysian" attempt to transfigure and say Yes to life. The present moment was lifted out of its original eschatological context and granted an immediate mystical-sacramental relation to God. Thereby the Kingdom of God becomes "eternally" present and accessible to anyone, at any moment, through belief. Mircea Eliade has pointed out that the religious man in general lives in a "continual present."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, ancient Catholic theology and modern existential theology are united in establishing the present moment as the arena in which is encountered an eternal God. Bultmann defines belief as "submission to and recognition of the moment."<sup>37</sup> But when the moment becomes an "eternal now" it loses all contact with the eschatological expectation which provided the original meaning of the Gospel. Time itself comes to usurp the redemptive role of the Messiah-Son of Man. For the ultimate form of Christian denial is absorption in the present moment.

Perhaps Paul alone grasped the theological significance of the eschatological event of Jesus-Messiah. While living in expectation of the near advent of the End, Paul believed that the final gifts of the Spirit were present in the believer in Christ: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). God has put his seal upon the believers and given them his Spirit as a "guarantee" of the coming consummation (II Cor. 1:22). Already possessed of the powers of the End (which wage war even within himself against the powers of the old æon), the believer is called forth to battle in the final war against the kingdom of this world. Certain of the great victory which is soon to come, the Christian's relation to the world is expressed in Paul's "as if . . . not" (I Cor. 7:29ff.). For he has already triumphed over the old æon insofar as he has died and risen with Christ and shared there in the first fruits of victory.

Consequently, the Christian is dead to this world and is reborn in the

<sup>35</sup> Preiss, Theo, *Life in Christ*, trans. Harold Knight, S.C.M. Press, 1954, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Eliade, Mircea, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Pantheon Books, 1954, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> Bultmann, *Essays*, p. 14.

new æon. Yet the new æon is the dawning Kingdom of God. It is no eternal spiritual reality which exists "above" the world. It is a reality which is only a reality through the destruction which it will soon bring to the world. Its "dawning" presence has already liberated the believers from their enslavement to the world, its imminent consummation will issue in the absolute destruction of the world. Hence, the Christian must treat the world—the present moment—as if it had no autonomous value or reality. This is the one kind of *als ob* thinking present in genuine eschatological thought. The world is grasped by the believer only in relation to the End which must soon come upon it. And it is this belief—this eschatological expectation—which makes possible the radical obedience of the servants of the End. In the purity of its eschatological experience primitive Christianity may justifiably be regarded as the ultimate form of rebellion against "reality," as "the will to nothingness pronounced holy." The disciple of Jesus looks forward to a dissolution of "reality" that will make possible the authentic realization of faith and love.

# The Cardinal Dogma of Religious Existentialism

WARREN E. STEINKRAUS

## I

IT IS DIFFICULT to predict when the stampede of religious thinkers to philosophic existentialism will stop. Yet F. H. Heinemann in a volume published early in 1958 alleged that "the crisis and the approaching end of Christian existentialism are now clearly visible."<sup>1</sup> There are some moderns who would deny this vigorously. If Heinemann's claim is based on an observation of numbers of thinkers and "younger theologians" turning from existentialism, there seems to be little statistical support for his conclusion. If he means that a very powerful branch of the Christian church is officially becoming increasingly opposed to a wedding of Christianity and existentialism, he is probably correct.<sup>2</sup> But if Heinemann's suggestion implies that Christian existentialism is nearing its end because of some inherent weakness, he might just as well have said that it is in error and must be rejected whether it is approaching its end or not.

It is the thesis of this article that there is at least one fundamental dogma in religious existentialism which has not only been insufficiently challenged, but has not even been noticed critically in the rush toward the "new" and "modern" in religious thinking. I shall attempt to show that one of the central tenets of all religious existentialists, especially Christian, is really an uncritical dogma which is repeatedly and unquestioningly affirmed, but which cannot be and is not ordinarily defended by reason or an appeal to experienced facts. When this dogma is pointed out and its baselessness revealed, much of the current force and most of the appeal

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<sup>1</sup> Heinemann, F. H., *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament*, Harper & Brothers, 1958, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, see p. 150, where Heinemann calls attention to the papal encyclical *Humani generis* of August 12, 1950, which rejects existentialism as an aberration because of its "historicism, irrationalism, individualism, subjectivism, and pessimism . . . and its degradation of human reason." He also implies that Marcel has repudiated the appellation, "Christian existentialist" (p. 149). However, the advertising blurb for a recent volume on Jaspers calls him "the leading Christian existentialist."

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of religious existentialism is lost, despite its helpful psychological insights.

One reason that religious existentialism has been attractive to contemporaries is that it has emphasized being committed to a faith rather than speculating on the validity of a faith. Dissatisfaction with mere theological speculation or "objective philosophizing" has understandably prompted many religious thinkers to adopt an existentialist attitude; for existentialism is concerned with a living human being, his present problems and his own ultimate destiny, not with technical questions which do not obviously require commitment or dedication.<sup>3</sup> In a world which is already overcomplicated with material technology, some moderns have sought an outlook which avoided a thought technology. In religious existentialism they have found an answer, for here the primary emphasis is placed on the courage to *be* someone rather than to formulate a *theory* of being.

The religious existentialists have made much capital of this idea of commitment or involvement, sometimes implying that they were the first to recognize its significance. And they have gone on to say, following the lead of Kierkegaard, that a person cannot both be a devotee of a faith and a critic of that faith. Regarding Christianity, the main thing is to *be* a Christian, not to speculate on theological problems. They add that it is quite impossible for one to be a judge or critic of Christianity and truly a Christian at the same time. To try to be both is to show an ignorance of what true religion is. Christianity cannot first be talked about as something appropriate for discussion. It must be immediately felt and grasped, perhaps in an encounter with the divine through the historic church. If there is to be any speculation or criticism, it can occur only *after* one is already committed, and the criticisms will be from within. The rational enterprise will not be much more than an elaboration and exposition of a faith which itself can neither be derived nor verified by objective reason. The late David Roberts tells us of a fundamental distinction between "*knowing about* the truth in some theoretical detached way and *being grasped* by the truth in a decisively personal manner." He then adds, "Only by the latter approach . . . can a man be so grasped and changed inwardly as to deepen and clarify his relationship to reality, even as a thinker."<sup>4</sup>

A corollary of this view is the questionable assertion that it is quite

<sup>3</sup> David Roberts tells us that existentialism "should be of compelling interest to the Christian thinker today, for it protests against those intellectual and social forces which are destroying freedom. It calls men away from stifling abstractions and automatic conformity. It drives us back to the most basic inner problems; what it means to be a self, how we ought to use our freedom, how we can find and keep the courage to face death." (Roberts, *Existentialism and Religious Belief*, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 4.) It is not obvious that existentialism is the only movement that does this for Christian thinkers!

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

impossible for reason to be considered trustworthy in its own right unless one has indeed been properly grasped and changed within. Reason is a valid mental tool only after it has been enlightened by faith. Thus Tillich pontificates:

Reason stands, like everything in man, under the bondage of estrangement. There is no part of man that is excepted from the universal destiny of sin. For the cognitive function of man's spiritual life this means that reason is blinded and has become unable to recognize God. The eyes of reason must be opened by the revelatory presence of the divine Spirit in the human spirit. Only when this happens can truth be received by human reason.<sup>5</sup>

Now this of course is a modernized form of the Augustinian view that we must believe in order to know.<sup>6</sup> Dedication or conversion must precede thought. We must be committed before we think. Thus faith is prior to reason even though some would say that "reason is a necessary constituent of religion."<sup>7</sup> Thought cannot achieve proper religious truth unless it is the thought of one who has made the leap of faith. No man can arrive at a worthy religious faith by speculating or reasoning about the grounds for the validity of faith, which is always an act of response and never a result of reasoning. However, once a person has had a revelatory experience and commits himself existentially, his reason is then freed from its former bondage and can serve as an instrument of clarification and elaboration of the faith. Under no circumstances could reason validate or verify faith before an experience of confrontation or an existential encounter.

This is the cardinal dogma of religious existentialism and it is also its chief error. It is a dogma because those who accept it are not ordinarily prepared to show how it is established. With Karl Barth they would say: "Really responsible, up-to-date theological thought, in genuine rapprochement with its contemporaries, will reveal itself to be such even today . . . by refusing to discuss the basis of its grounds."<sup>8</sup> That it is an error we shall endeavor to show below. It becomes an arrogant dogma in practice, for Christian existentialists are given to making pronouncements upon those

<sup>5</sup> Tillich, Paul, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, University of Chicago Press, 1955, p. 64. On the next page he adds: "Ontology presupposes a conversion, an opening of the eyes, a revelatory experience. It is not a matter of detached observation, analysis and hypothesis." But the critic may ask how such a statement can be verified. How can it be shown that its contrary is unalterably false? As is the case with much of Tillich's writing, this is nothing more than assertion.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that while religious existentialists think that belief in God makes possible the pursuit of truth, John Dewey, in sharp antithesis, holds that belief in God hinders that pursuit. (See Dewey, *A Common Faith*, Yale University Press, 1934.) One wonders whether these are the only two alternatives.

<sup>7</sup> Hutchinson, John A., *Faith, Reason and Existence*, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Barth, Karl (tr. G. T. Thomson), *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, p. 31.

who are and who are not Christians—depending on whether or not they accept this dogma!

But we must ask what grounds there are for asserting that a person must be committed to a faith first before he can reason validly about that faith. Is commitment to a faith necessary before honest thought can proceed? And if it is, how can this be shown? How is it known that a person cannot both be dedicated to a faith and be a critic of that faith, challenging even the most fundamental aspects of said faith? And what evidence, besides the pressure of one particular historical position, provides the basis for the corollary that one's reason is tainted until he adopts the faith? There does not seem to be an *a priori* way of determining that man's reason is sinful before he is a Christian. Is the religious existentialist willing to debate the validity of this dogma and its corollary? Or is the very act of debating it a denial of it? Sometimes such thinkers seem to claim immunity from criticism. But if the dogma *is* valid, how might it be validated? We look in vain for an epistemological base for the dogma and none is forthcoming, though some small defense has been offered. To debate the dogma is to admit that it might be erroneous. Thus it is not debated. We have the circumstance, then, of a religious view which in its extreme form protects itself by asserting that its critics are irreligious or unchristian just because they are critics. It seems that Christian existentialists cannot admit the bare possibility that their outlook *might* be wrong. It just *might* be the case that faith is not prior to thought, or that faith is arrived at by honest reflection on the evidence.

## II

In his popular textbook, *Faith, Reason, and Existence*, John A. Hutchison has undertaken a "defense" of the dogma of the primacy of faith.<sup>9</sup> He believes he can support it (1) by certain observations on the nature of logical systems, (2) by noting the relation between thought and action, and (3) by contrasting the Greek and Hebraic emphasis on the essence of man, urging that man at his deepest level is an agent. We shall examine his thought under these heads.

(1) Regarding logical systems, Professor Hutchison maintains first that all logical systems have postulates or assumptions and the attitude one

<sup>9</sup> He has advanced the same position more recently in an article where he asserts that first premises are confessional statements of faith and "metaphysical thinking may thus be regarded as man's attempt to be rationally responsible for the faith he holds. . . . It is not false to assert that all philosophies have religious foundations." ("The Uses of Natural Theology," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 55 (1958), p. 943.)

takes toward these is really a matter of faith. Secondly, he argues that in logic which is applied to human experience, it is impossible for a thinker to avoid assumptions, conscious or unconscious, about the nature of man and his status in the world. Impartiality is impossible, for "biases function at every level of mental inquiry."<sup>10</sup> Biases regarding basic values are instances of faith and are obviously prior to thought.

Now Hutchison's observations here are interesting, but it is hard to see how one can derive the dogma of the primacy of faith from them. It is not at all evident that all logical systems begin with assumptions and postulates. (Hutchison wrongly equates "premise" and "postulate.") Are the Aristotelian laws of thought, namely, Identity, Noncontradiction, and Excluded Middle, mere "assumptions"? Are they not necessary prerequisites for human thinking and communication which cannot be denied without being assumed? Clearly they do not have the arbitrary character often typical of religious propositions. Indeed, the foundation of logical systems may more properly be called "hypotheses"—hypotheses which are ordinarily selected thoughtfully from among competing hypotheses. For example, the Hegelian logic of coherence is not a postulate, assumption, or "leap." It is a carefully derived methodology, critical of itself, and accepted because it is thought to be superior to such alternatives as strict analysis or pure deductivism. Furthermore, a logician's "assumptions" if he *ever* makes any, strictly speaking, are assumptions of method not of content. A religious faith is a matter of content. It is quite improper for Hutchison to extend the meaning of *faith* to cover both the careful postulates and hypotheses of logicians and the vagaries of religious enthusiasts.

A similar criticism can be made regarding Hutchison's second observation about logic as it is applied to human problems. The methodology of the social sciences, no matter how limited in perspective, is still a self-critical methodology not seized in a moment of anxiety but selected thoughtfully from among other possibilities and with the chance for self-correction. Yet religious existentialists insist that biases are always operating in the reporting of social or historical facts. Concerning their view as applied to history, C. B. Armstrong has decisively commented:

To regard all historical writing as necessarily tendentious is a surprisingly cynical attitude which cuts both ways. Surely there are honest historians who sincerely follow the facts, endeavour to see them in just proportion as they happened,

<sup>10</sup> Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 101. Similarly, Roberts tells us that religious existentialists "insist that in connection with ultimate matters it is impossible to lay aside the impassioned concerns of the human individual." (Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 7.) He does not say how he arrived at this generalization. Perhaps it was a special truth vouchsafed to him.

and draw conclusions from the picture as given, and not from a previously adopted principle of interpretation. If all history is written from personal presuppositions the search for historical truth would be a battle of principles of a theological or philosophical kind and not an attempt to discover what happened.<sup>11</sup>

If thinkers who deal with history and other human problems are unable to be impartial and objective, as Hutchison asserts, how could Hutchison *know* this when by his own admission *his* analysis would likewise be biased and partial? If Hutchison's line of thinking were correct it could only be shown to be so by someone who was virtually omniscient about motives and backgrounds. Certain Freudians and some sociologists of knowledge have up to this time been the only ones willing to admit to such omniscience. And now Hutchison and other religious existentialists have come forth with similar claims to special knowledge of ulterior motives and conditioning influences supposedly at work in the minds of social scientists and nonexistentialists. Yet, it can be urged that the person who asserts the impossibility of being objective<sup>12</sup> has in that allegation contradicted himself. He has said that it is an objective truth that there is no objective truth.

One can make no headway in communication with persons of different viewpoints if he charges that they cannot escape bias, and implies that his own view is the only properly unbiased one. At this point religious existentialists cut themselves off from rational discourse. They dogmatically insist that all are biased and they are unwilling to challenge the validity or basis for such an insistence. The critic of the religious existentialist does not know where to turn, for his motives and background are under attack, not his ideas. That such impasses occur is evident when one attends conferences of contemporary theologians or participates in the ubiquitous Danforth Seminars of "Christian scholars." Nonexistentialists are virtually outsiders, there being no ground for continuing discussion if the dogma of the primacy of faith is not granted.<sup>13</sup> In any case, Hutchison or others cannot establish

<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, C. B., "Christianity and History," *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 55 (1957), pp. 135f. As illustrative of the point of view Armstrong here criticizes, one might note Roger Shinn's egregious assertion regarding Toynbee, "that with a more Christian theology he might be a more empirical historian." (Shinn, review of Montagu's *Toynbee and History*, in *The Christian Century*, Vol. 73 (1956), p. 1133.)

<sup>12</sup> L. H. DeWolf has made the comment: "The charge that objectivity is impossible overlooks the capacity of man to assume various roles alternately in imagination. . . . By imagination a disciplined mind can assume the role of spectator under any circumstances whatever, so long as the power of responsible choice remains at all." (DeWolf, *The Religious Revolt Against Reason*, Harper & Brothers, 1949, p. 111.) See also my "Objectivity and Taking Sides," *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 5 (1947).

<sup>13</sup> This point gains support from William H. Bernhardt in his article: "The 'Perfect' Theological Dictionary" (*The Christian Century*, Vol. 73 (1956), pp. 138ff.). And Walter Kaufmann has made the general comment applicable here: "The analytic philosophers and the existentialists can no longer communicate with each other or with any truly different point of view; they have lost the art of dialogue." (Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, Harper & Brothers, 1958, p. 24. See also pp. 15-25.)

this dogma in the philosophy of religion by noting that principles of interpretation might be at work in the social sciences.

Yet this point of view of those who are constantly hunting for presuppositions has had more influence than its illogic warrants. Some have used it to "validate" Christian faith by announcing that since everyone approaches life with inescapable biases, such positions as "secular humanism" or "scientific atheism" or Christianity cannot really be rationally tested. If all "Western minds" were thinking properly and with due regard to tradition, they would see that lurking behind and influencing all Western culture is the Judeo-Christian heritage. It is that which has made us. It is only proper, then, for thoughtful "Western man" to admit this and to accept that faith which has made him and the "Western world" what it is today. This line of thinking illustrates a level of "tendermindedness" which William James could hardly squeeze into his famous category.

(2) Hutchison's further efforts to defend the primacy of faith are shoddy. His chain of reasoning has these links: "Thinking is a form of doing and not vice versa," hence man is not so much a rational animal as an agent. Thus decision "is an absolutely inescapable category for responsible human selves."<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard, we are told, recognized this "truth." Then Kant and Dewey are introduced as also having recognized the primacy of action. We next read: "If we now further define faith as an 'assumption upon which men live and act' we may learn from all these widely varying philosophers the primacy of faith."<sup>15</sup> The logical gap here is as wide as any gulf one has to bridge when he makes the leap of faith.

Hutchison's view of Kant is virtually a howler. In support of the primacy of faith, the man who wrote *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* is called to testify! For Kant, the primacy of practical reason, which Hutchison mentions, does not mean the primacy of faith. Rather, it means that reason is employed for the sake of bettering life. Nowhere does Kant say that action or faith is logically prior to reason. The postulates of God, Freedom, and Immortality are first of all *reasonable* postulates, postulates which are derived rationally, not romantically grasped in lieu of reasonableness. Nor are they ever offered by Kant as prerequisites to the proper functioning of reason.

Then Hutchison introduces the modern psychological categories of stimulus-response to show "the function of thought in clarifying and guiding action." It is not at all clear that he is making any sense when he

<sup>14</sup> Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

alleges that "the primacy of action again emerges as our conclusion."<sup>16</sup> Even if it did so "emerge," how would this support faith as primary? Has not the meaning of the word "faith" in such a context been extended beyond intelligibility?

(3) His concluding observations showing, first, the contrast between the Greek emphasis on contemplation and the Hebraic stress on action,<sup>17</sup> and secondly, that man has to be regarded fundamentally not as an observer but as an agent "at the deepest level," are hardly arguments for the primacy of faith. They really beg the question. One does not establish the primacy of faith by questionable generalizations about Greeks and Hebrews. Nor does he do so by an overanalytic and abstract division of the human being into "observer" and "agent," then claiming that the latter is more characteristically "human"—whatever that means. Hutchison's case here is no more convincing than the other proposals he has made.

### III

But there are other arguments besides his which a religious existentialist might conceivably employ to support his dogma. We will notice three.

(1) The religious existentialist could say that his dogma needs no rational defense for it makes an immediate appeal to the mind. Anyone acquainted with the world of thought and religion, he might say, knows at once that a living human being cannot apply reason to a faith unless he has first accepted that faith. Kierkegaard tells us that "it is only the systematists and objective philosophers who have ceased to be human beings."<sup>18</sup> More can be known about a faith by a person with deep emotional dedication than by one who seeks to understand it "from the outside." The religious existentialist, of course, is one who has taken sides. If he were to be impartial he would have to abandon his faith. To examine his faith objectively is to cease to have that faith. All examination is from within.

But it is not clear that this is necessarily or even probably true. L. H. DeWolf has observed that a high degree of detachment can be obtained by rigorous self-discipline. "Rational objectivity," he writes, "is not a lack of concern but rather a disciplined control of emotional factors such as, to a greater or lesser degree, are almost invariably present."<sup>19</sup> Later we

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> Here again he has overstated his case. Such important Greeks as Socrates and Plato were quite concerned that intellectuals take an active part in society. And there is much in Hebrew religion which favors contemplation over action (cf. Psalms). Kaufmann remarks that Socrates and Plato, among others, "protested against any bifurcation of intense experience and the analytic intellect." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 24f.)

<sup>18</sup> In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 85, quoted in Heinemann, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> DeWolf, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

read: "Passion actually aids objectivity rather than interfering with it, provided the person who experiences it has learned to harness his deepest concerns to the burden of self-discipline."<sup>20</sup> There are few who could deny that the situation DeWolf describes does indeed occur time after time as an authentic human experience. Religious existentialists want to prescribe the order of experience—that faith precedes reason—and then announce that if this order doesn't occur, the religious experience is not valid or proper.

(2) Or again, the proponent of the dogma of religious existentialism could assert that it is true because "thought doesn't create experience"—that one must therefore begin with faith before he thinks. By this he suggests that all of one's philosophizing or theorizing about God or the Trinity does not actually beget the living vital faith that is characteristic of Christians. The religious existentialist claims that his faith is something that happens to someone in an unmistakable encounter, and only after that may he use reason to interpret his experience. He implies that a non-existentialist view therefore lacks decision. Reason never motivates one to become religious, he would add. Indeed, according to Kierkegaard, one cannot really know what religious questions are about unless he approaches them with personal concern.<sup>21</sup>

Now this observation does have some appeal, but again it is a limited view of the reasoning person. First by no means do nonexistentialist philosophers of religion characteristically say that thought can create experience. But if this is admitted, it does not follow that one must make some religious leap before using reason. One may use reason to examine various claims to religious truth, and many claims there are indeed, including the existentialist's. One may have been brought up in a religious environment or a secular environment. He may nevertheless be able to evaluate the truth of a position in a way quite similar to that by which he judges whether he will vote Democrat, Republican, or Prohibitionist when the time comes for a decision. There are all sorts and conditions of experiences. Thoughtful men interpret experiences as rationally as they can. They treat the various claims of the religious consciousness with as much objectivity as possible. It has not been shown by reason or evidence that a thinker cannot treat the claims of a Vedantist, or a Jehovah's Witness, or even a Christian existentialist in this manner.

But the religious existentialist will not have it this way. He insists that *his* outlook on the relation of reason to faith is the only possible outlook

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> So comments David Roberts in *op. cit.*, p. 95.

for the Christian. Hence, in commenting on the point just made, he would probably do little more than arbitrarily reaffirm his dogma or unleash an *ad hominem* attack. Such is the case with John Burkhart, who in criticizing an opponent of existentialism wrote: "He wants a validation for faith, neglecting the fact that our ultimate presuppositions can never be validated."<sup>22</sup> The very point at issue, of course, is whether or not ultimate presuppositions can be validated. It is not a patent certainty that they cannot be! Sometimes such thinkers go on to tell us that if we use reason to evaluate all religious claims we are illustrating a type of self-sufficiency which means we are separating ourselves from God. Some, in their more polemic moments, tell thinkers who trust objective reasoning that they are "trying to be like God."<sup>23</sup> To that kind of asseveration one might reply that those who do not trust reason "are trying to be like the devil." But such exchanges are fruitless.

(3) One other possible defense of the religious existentialist's dogma remains. He might argue that one cannot both be a critic of Christianity and an active believer in it, for to do so violates the fundamental logical law of noncontradiction, or at least the law of identity, that every entity is what it is. If you are a critic of Christianity, you are a critic. If you are a Christian, you are a Christian. You cannot be both one and the other. Commitment to the Christian faith is prior to any criticism. Indeed, any criticism is tainted until one becomes a Christian.

Now if the religious existentialist resorts to this kind of argument, he provides us with a good example of the way in which abstract logic lags behind human experience. From the standpoint of mere logical propositions it does not seem that one can both be a critic of a faith and a participant in it. Yet human experience and history testify that such an apparent paradox is an empirical occurrence. The traditional dilemma of change and identity on the level of logic seems insoluble, but every human being has the living experience of both change and identity. He experiences himself as an enduring self through manifold changes and through time. Similarly, it may be urged that some of the finest Christian personalities have been both critics and believers simultaneously.<sup>24</sup> What may be logically impossible from the standpoint of juxtaposed propositions may be and is psychologically possible. Some Christians have *in fact* been deeply dedicated and have

<sup>22</sup> John E. Burkhart, "After the Leap, Steady," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 6 (1951), p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Emil Brunner considers rational doubt a form of self-deification in his *Revelation and Reason*. (tr. Wyon), The Westminster Press, 1946, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> To which a Christian existentialist may fondly retort, "They really are not Christians"—which thing is repugnant question-begging.

in fact raised questions about the ground for their dedication. It is this sort of thing which Hocking has called "The Principle of Alternation."<sup>25</sup> And DeWolf has ably commented:

Not only is it possible for a man to alternate in the roles of participant and critical spectator; it is even necessary that he do so if his own practical role in life is to be meaningful. I cannot know to my utmost ability what my own commitment means if I do not consider the meaning of alternative commitments of which my own implies the denial.<sup>26</sup>

The skilled musical conductor alternates between joyous, even passionate participation in the musical work and thoughtful analysis of the technical structure of the music. One would not say that Maestro Toscanini's enthusiasm for the *Eroica* was lessened by his technical scrutiny of the score or by a comparison of Beethoven with Dittersdorf. Indeed, his enthusiasm for Beethoven was enhanced by his technical and comparative study. Religious existentialists dogmatically tell us that participation comes before analysis, commitment before thought, and that analysis hurts participation and thought hinders commitment. Concrete experiences in many areas of life deny this as a necessary and exclusive truth. So do the lives of buoyant Christian spirits who are far more Christlike than some neurotic Danish dilettante.

#### IV

In conclusion we can say that the cardinal dogma of the religious existentialist, namely the primacy of faith, together with its corollary that reason is corrupt until enlightened by faith, cannot be verified either by *a priori* proof or empirical generalization. At best it is merely an hypothesis about the religious life for which there is little support and against which there are the above arguments and evidence. At worst, it is an arrogant dogma which professes to rule on all philosophies of religion without giving an account of itself. But in spite of such traits, the primacy of faith is a principle which has infected much of contemporary religious thinking. It has become a phenomenon in the sociology of theological knowledge. It is a principle implicit in some of the otherworldly statements made by groups of churchmen, and it is a dogma working behind the scenes in the formulation of morbid resolutions concerning man's frailty and sinfulness proposed at Christian student conferences. It has become a criterion for the selection of theological school faculties and for the choice of manuscripts by fad-conscious book publishers. It is a dogma presupposed in many

<sup>25</sup> See his *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Yale University Press, 1912, ch. XXVIII.

<sup>26</sup> DeWolf, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

esoteric theological discussions, and it is taken for granted in the writings of some of the most vocal theologians and philosophers of this decade. And yet, in spite of the tremendous sociological, psychological, historical, and prestige pressure exerted on behalf of views undergirded by this dogma, it is at base unsupportable and erroneous.

Frank recognition of the dogma and its epistemological baselessness would do much to clear the ground of the subjectivisms and vagaries present in the current neo-romantic religious outlook, which, with very little opposition indeed, falsely claims to be a religious awakening adequate to the needs of "modern man"—whoever he is.

# Borden Parker Bowne:

## Philosophical Theologian and Personalist

PETER A. BERTOCCI

### I

BORDEN PARKER BOWNE was born on January 14, 1847, and died on April 1, 1910. Eleven months before his death he had said of himself:

It is hard to classify me with accuracy. I am a theistic idealist, a personalist, a transcendental empiricist, an idealistic realist, and realistic idealist; but all these phrases need to be interpreted. . . . I largely agree with Lotze, but I transcend him. I hold half of Kant's system, but sharply dissent from the rest. There is a strong smack of Berkeley's philosophy, with a complete rejection of his theory of knowledge. I am a Personalist, the first of the clan in any thoroughgoing sense.<sup>1</sup>

Even this philosophic self-portrait leaves much to be said about the spiritual pilgrimage of the boy who left the farm in New Jersey at seventeen to drive a delivery wagon in Brooklyn before preparing himself to enter New York University in 1867 and later to study at Paris, Halle, and Göttingen. For, from 1876, when Bowne began his teaching at Boston University, until his death, he was to be involved in a many-sided critique of dogmatic Christian supernaturalism, at the same time that he was defending Christian insights against uncritical naturalism. A responsible Christian scholar, immersed in the life of a Christian community, he could not disengage his thinking about religious questions from his philosophic enquiries. Thus, he was to develop a constructive metaphysics, theory of knowledge, theory of man, and an ethics, at the same time that he was trying to give an adequate interpretation of religious experience.

There were those who realized the stature of Bowne as a philosopher during his lifetime, even though his contact with professional philosophers

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from p. 280 of the best full study of Bowne's life and work by Bishop Francis J. McConnell, *Borden Parker Bowne* (Abingdon Press, 1929). An excellent review of Bowne's work with special analysis of Bowne's theology is the (unpublished) doctoral dissertation written by Dr. Frederick Thomas Trotter, *The Christian Theology of Borden Parker Bowne* (Boston University, 1958).

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and philosophical organizations was extremely limited. President Porter of Yale and President Harper of the University of Chicago invited Bowne to join their faculties. Rudolf Eucken of Jena was to say of him, "Bowne was a philosopher of America, and as such all America may be proud of him and of his memory."<sup>2</sup> John Cook Wilson of Oxford held him in higher esteem than he did William James. William James, who twitted Bowne about being "a better Methodist than you,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Bowne after reading his *Personalism*:

... you and I are now aiming at exactly the same end. . . . It seemed to me over and over again that you were planting your feet identically in footprints which my feet were accustomed to—quite independently, of course, of my example, which was what made the coincidence so gratifying. . . . so I fight in exactly the same cause, the reinstatement of the fullness of practical life, after the treatment of it by so much past philosophy as spectral.<sup>4</sup>

But the man who was to be first dean of the Boston University Graduate School was much too absorbed in dealing with the underlying intellectual concerns of his day to be self-conscious about fame. He would have been quite pleased to know that Albert Schweitzer would one day speak favorably of him, claiming that Bowne had influenced his central conception of "reverence for life."<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, there were battles to be fought close to home. For example, Bowne rose to the defense of his colleague in the department of Old Testament in Boston University School of Theology, H. G. Mitchell. The latter was finally removed for views that "in the scholarly world are about as well established as geology and the Copernican astronomy."<sup>6</sup> He was himself to be charged with heresy, brought to trial in 1904, and vindicated.

It is not surprising that one who urged as strongly as Bowne did that no light of any kind, scientific, moral, or religious, be kept under a bushel should find little sympathy or understanding in the intellectual climate of his day. The Christian community was not intellectually equipped to deal with the interpretations being given new scientific discoveries by naturalistic and positivistic thinkers. The Christian community wanted defense; Bowne sought to sift the chaff from the wheat. The philosophic world, in the name of logic or evolution, favored a straightforward speculative scheme, come what may of the concrete person; Bowne gave it a personalistic idealism which was too speculative for the naturalists, positivists, and emerging

<sup>2</sup> Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> McConnell, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>5</sup> As quoted by President Harold C. Case of Boston University, who recently spoke with Schweitzer.

<sup>6</sup> McConnell, *ibid.*, p. 182.

pragmatists, and too pluralistic and broken-edged for the absolute idealists.

As R. T. Flewelling has said, in Bowne's battle against oversimplified scientific materialism on the one hand and oversimplified faith on the other, he was dubbed by the former "a mere theologian in spite of the logic of his argument," and by the latter "he was called to account in the last of the heresy trials."<sup>7</sup> Yet as Werkmeister notes, "Bowne's philosophy thus laid anew the foundation for a theistic philosophy at a time when materialistic evolutionism, higher criticism, and comparative religion threatened the very existence of Christian theology itself."<sup>8</sup>

## II

I have already been trying to hint at what should be clearer fifty years after the death of Bowne. Bowne was embarked not on a defense of Christianity (and least of all the "promotion" of Methodism); his passion was not a crusade against biblical literalists in the church or against all-or-none critics outside the ecclesiastical fold. While Bowne's involvement in the preparation of ministers for the church led him to take seriously the interpretation and application of Christian theological and ethical convictions, his underlying concern as a scholar was to sift the chaff of parochial belief and ecclesiastical custom from the wheat of reasonably defensible Christian truths. And here, we would suggest, he was influenced at critical points by foundational analyses of a metaphysical and epistemological nature, and by studies in ethical theory and the more philosophical psychology of his times.

Adequate justification of these statements is not possible here. Yet that theological studies and philosophical analysis and synthesis were in constant interplay in his mind is evident even from the chronological sequence of his seventeen books. Even before his first book, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, appeared in 1874 Bowne had written five articles, four of which were analyses of Spencer's psychology and metaphysics, and a fifth an evaluation of moral intuitionism and utilitarianism. Very early in Bowne's career, his concern for the logic of theism led him to write *Studies in Theism* (1879), but note that these studies were followed in 1882 by *Metaphysics: A Study in First Principles*, and in 1886 by *Introduction to Psychological Theory*.

In sum, studies of the nature of man, the nature of the universe, the

<sup>7</sup> Flewelling, R. T., "Brightman: *Ex Umbras In Lucem*," *The Personalist*, 34 (1953), p. 343.

<sup>8</sup> Werkmeister, W. H., *A History of Philosophical Ideas in America*. New York: Ronald Press, 1949, p. 121.

nature of belief in God set the stage for the *Principles of Ethics* in 1892 and for *The Philosophy of Theism* in 1887 (which, revised, appeared in 1902 as *Theism*). In his prime, Bowne systematically expounded his theory of knowledge and reality in *The Theory of Thought and Knowledge* (1897) and *Metaphysics* (1898). His remaining works (with the exception of *Personalism* in 1908 and in 1912 of *Kant and Spencer*) deal with the development of an adequate philosophical theism and with more specific Christian themes, as indicated in the titles: *The Christian Revelation* (1896), *The Christian Life* (1899), *The Atonement* (1900), *Theism* (1902), *The Immanence of God* (1905), *Studies in Christianity* (1909), and *The Essence of Religion* (1910).

Bowne cannot be credited with a full-blown systematic Christian theology. But the most cursory survey of his works would reveal a metaphysical personalism which is not a "closet philosophy," and a Christian theology which seeks to keep the vitality of religious experience in constant interaction with the life of reason and morality. If we can here make Bowne's approach to theism and theological thinking clear, we shall be bringing into focus both a central concern of Bowne's life and one of the most rewarding themes for further study in the contemporary situation.

### III

The "logic of theism" is not a series of deductions moving from an undeniable beginning to an inerrant conclusion. For Bowne, reason never dictates the content of human experience, or of the world beyond it. Bowne was as "existentialist" as anyone could be in keeping reason from defining what experiences must be. At the same time, he never could, in the name of "experience," set aside the demands of deductive logic or of circumspect inductive procedure.

What Bowne sees is that each phase of human nature has a way of making pontifical claims about what reality must be. Yet the man who has learned anything at all from his own experience, or that of the race, knows that each side of his complex nature has at some time claimed authority for conclusions which later had to be rejected. Why then should we not make it a matter of policy, where claims to truth are involved, that we allow no facet of our nature to pontificate truths for the other facets to accept without criticism?

What Bowne also saw is that we cannot always wait for logical demonstration. Since we always need to go on living on some avenue of life or other, we must venture in accordance with "intuitions" or "solutions" which

are neither absurd nor demonstrably certain, but only probable. Thus Bowne says: "There is an element of faith and volition latent in all theorizing. Where we cannot prove, we believe. Where we cannot demonstrate, we choose sides. . . . logic has only a regulative function with respect to the great beliefs by which men and nations live."<sup>9</sup>

There will be some doubt among interpreters as to whether Bowne at particular points in his thinking allowed "the great catholic convictions of the race" (never, in my estimation, carefully whittled out) to determine his conclusions more than he should have. But there can be little doubt of Bowne's conviction that, in making the case for theism, "the needs of the intellect, the demands and forebodings of conscience, the cravings of the affections, the impulses of the aesthetic nature, and the ideals of the will—all enter into the problem, apart from words of revelation, or any direct influence of God on the soul."<sup>10</sup>

Over and over again when Bowne is involved in evaluating the truth of Christian beliefs, such as the divinity of Jesus, the atonement, resurrection, and miracles in general, his conclusion turns on the demand of the moral consciousness. Religious intuitions and beliefs have to pass muster before the entire man. Why? Because they "always reflect the stage of mental and moral development reached by the individual or the community . . ."<sup>11</sup> At the same time, "purely metaphysical arguments concerning the Absolute, or Unconditioned, do not bring us in sight of living religious sentiment,"<sup>12</sup> for the claims of the aesthetic and ethical life need to be taken into account.

To put all this differently, man is not chiefly an abstract speculator. He exists as "will, conscience, emotion, aspiration," as well as intellect and understanding. He finds himself living by "a great variety of practical postulates and assumptions which are not logical deductions or speculative necessities, but a kind of *modus vivendi* with the universe."<sup>13</sup> If he followed his logical nature alone, he would have to obey the law, "Nothing may be believed which is not proved." However, "the law the mind actually follows is this: Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real in default of positive disproof."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Theism*, New York: American Book Company, 1902, p. iv.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

## IV

Bowne, we have been urging, insisted that every phase of human experience be given its day in court—though the court insists that the ventures of the total person be kept growing and sensitive. But the whole of human existence is embroiled in mystery. One cannot read Bowne at any point without being aware of his own sense of mystery—a sense which made him perhaps all the more impatient with those who were either too rationalistic or too sentimental about the fact of mystery.

One can almost take the measure of philosophers and theologians by noting how they deal with mystery. There are some who, despite all their emphasis on the fact that life is essentially mysterious, in the last analysis have a way of using the mystery to justify their own conclusions. They talk and act as if "the mystery of being" justified their "leap of faith," theological or otherwise. There are some who acknowledge the mystery in words and then proceed to develop beliefs which can be so only if human logic is coextensive with all that is.

Bowne saw that the fact of mystery could be used to justify no particular conclusion. Mystery should challenge the intellect. Further, as Bowne said, "an element of mystery is needed for the development of both the moral and religious life."<sup>15</sup> Still, if we are fair with this fact of mystery in philosophy and religion, we cannot consider *any specific doctrine* as if it were the last word. Rather must we leave no stone unturned in the search for beliefs that do justice to what we do know.

One catches the spirit of Bowne's philosophical and theological methodology in a passage from a sermon on "The Mystery of Life and Its Practical Solution."

The deepest thing in religion is living trust and filial obedience; and how would this trust be possible unless there were mystery in life which compels us to venture on God? There must of course be reason in parental government, and the child that does not begin with trusting obedience, that must have everything explained to it before it will obey, is a sorry sight. Sadder still is his case who has not learned the lesson of trust in religion. No one knows what it is to walk with God in the deepest sense, who has not walked with him in the dark.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, no one finds ethical, religious, or metaphysical truth who is unwilling to follow the best he knows into whatever theoretical and practical activity will help him to get on with the business of living and knowing.

One, therefore, is not surprised to find Bowne fully aware of the

<sup>15</sup> *The Essence of Religion*, Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1910, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

problem persons face as they seek to express adequately the nonrational "certainties" by which they live. To live without symbols is neither possible nor desirable. However, figures of speech, symbols, and ritual will never be adequate to the full force of living, but they may, hopefully, be used to catch, develop, and revive the vigor and warmth of germinal experience. Thus Bowne concludes:

We are gradually learning that there is a language of poetry, of conscience, of emotion, of aspiration, of religion, as well as a language of logical understanding. And the former language is absurd and incredible when tested by the canons of the latter. Such language can be understood only on its own plane and by the life which generates it.<sup>17</sup>

## V

It is this concern for the dynamic, essentially creative totality of personal existence that one finds in all of Bowne's writing. His theism and his personalistic idealism were different levels of philosophical analysis. At each level, Bowne never lost this underlying concern to keep the totality of personal experience the center but not the circumference of theorizing.

We confine ourselves, as we conclude this essay, to indicating how the concrete demands of the whole person are involved in Bowne's belief that God is the Creator-Ground of all existence.

What is at stake, philosophically, is nothing less than the "mind's basal faith in the essential truthfulness of life and reality."<sup>18</sup> Our search for truth, we must remember, is "not driven by any compulsion of objective facts, but rather by the subjective necessity of self-realization and self-preservation."<sup>19</sup> There is always the logical possibility that the basal faith is false. But to accept skepticism is to move outside the court of life itself for purely polemic reasons. "The justification of life must come from life itself, but the formulation of life is a matter for logic."<sup>20</sup>

Beginning then in the midst of propulsive demands and experiences of all sorts, many of which are "opaque" and "unmanageable," how does the intellect proceed? It assumes, "spontaneously and unconsciously that at the center of all is order";<sup>21</sup> it holds to the ideal of a rational system, in which all is harmoniously connected. Unless it held to this belief, itself never fully confirmed through experience, the hope of objective knowledge would be dashed at the start.

Yet Bowne does not, on that account, move naïvely from an "inner

<sup>17</sup> *Studies in Christianity*, Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1909, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Theism*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

demand" to a final conclusion without reasoning. What would result, he asks us, if we assume that every being and event in the world is shut away from every other without connection? Our "universe would fall asunder into unconnected and uncaused units." Furthermore, the individual mind, one unconnected being among others, would be "shut up within itself."<sup>22</sup> But if this were actually so, how explain such human knowledge as we have? How explain the actual order and connection between beings and events which we depend upon in daily life and which scientific investigation describes? Bowne accordingly takes his first step in reasonable belief (not logical proof); he postulates an order of things not in random but in systematic interaction.

But this far any naturalist or scientific humanist would go. The intellect, however, has a further question to ask: How can systematic interaction between events be understood? Bowne, with the nature of the unified finite person in mind, postulates an infinite Person. For the finite mind, as we know it, is a unity in multiplicity. Complex in its various activities, it is, nevertheless, a unity of sensing, thinking, feeling, and willing (speaking in minimal terms). It is capable of entertaining purposes as it weaves together and organizes its experiences and actions. It can relate the variety of its experiences and actions together because, underived unity itself to begin with, it unceasingly systematizes them as far as it can. There will be important differences between a finite person and an infinite Person, of course, but no being incapable of intelligence, unity, and continuity can suffice to explain the systematic interaction we must postulate among beings and events in the world. The order and unity of things become intelligible "only through a unitary being which posits and maintains them in their mutual relations."<sup>23</sup>

But why, it may be asked, must we go beyond scientific naturalism or humanism and postulate a Cosmic Person to ground the interaction between beings? Why not have ultimate entities independent of each other and yet interacting with each other?

Well, suppose that you had many objects or events which, presumably, could exist without any dependence on each other and therefore in complete indifference to the nature of each other. How would you explain the fact that, in the world as we observe it, these entities do act upon each other in orderly ways? Here the temptation is to picture-think forces mechanically moving from one entity to the other—as if a force or action

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

which exists in one thing could "pass over" to another, when by definition there is nothing to link them. However you try to imagine such a series of transitive actions, says Bowne, you finally come to realize that if things are independent, there is no reason why one should in any way be affected by any other, let alone explain the dependable and orderly connection of events assumed by the scientific enterprise. Unless we postulate a deeper metaphysical Being<sup>24</sup> there is simply no way of explaining how things interact, or the order of interaction.

This is not the place for metaphysical details; but Bowne, in essence, is saying to us: In the last analysis you must choose either a seemingly imaginable but unintelligible multiplicity of "interacting" independent units, or an unimaginable but intelligible active World-Ground that is the constant Unity within which the interplay takes place and is controlled. To think through what the scientific world presupposes is ultimately to think a unified self-sufficient World-Ground as the line of least intellectual resistance. For metaphysical reasons Bowne holds that the nonpersonal, natural world is best conceived as identical with God, although God's nature, will, and purpose are not exhausted in the natural order.

Bowne realizes that this "speculative ground" is not the God of religion. But he is trying to show that the theist can meet the atheistic naturalist on the common ground of belief in a natural world and, by pressing for the intellectual groundwork of such belief, establish a strong presumption in favor of taking the testimony of religious experience seriously. To hypothesize God as World-Ground does not mean that God is an hypothesis —any more than to hypothesize genes is to mean that they are figments of thought. To hypothesize a World-Ground or God is to say, at least, that unless he exists the trust human beings have in the order of the natural world has no foundation beyond man's psychological, practical need.

But if a Person grounds all beings and interaction between them, why is the finite person not absorbed into the systematic unity of supernatural or unconditioned Being? Indeed, the "demands" of some forms of religious experience and of speculative logic have led great minds to this conclusion.

The argument which leads Bowne finally to resist any metaphysical monism or religious pantheism involves trust in reason itself, let alone the foundations of the moral life and worship. In essence it goes like this: We, as persons, draw conclusions. We cannot trust our conclusions if they are the sheer end-product in us of a network of psychic or biological events. Our conclusions must be the strongest reasonable ones, not the strongest

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 54ff.

psychic ones. We must be free to initiate and be guided by the demands of reasoned inference.

Hear Bowne himself: "The rational mind must not be controlled by its states but must control them." This means that it must be able to think twice, "to undo the irrational conjunctions of custom," and "to reserve its conclusion until the order of reason has been reached."<sup>25</sup> "If truth and error be alike necessary, there is no standard of truth left."<sup>26</sup> Truth, morality, and worship are meaningless if the mind lives in a world in which either "pure arbitrariness" or "pure necessity" reigns supreme. Thus, to hold that the person, the knowing unity in feeling, thinking, and willing, is a focus or part of unconditioned Being is to uproot the belief that persons can know truth, let alone choose goodness or direct their own purposes by God's.

Accordingly, Bowne concludes, in due course, that human beings are created as relatively independent agents interacting with the unified Person who creates them and maintains their ontic connections with each other and with the rest of the world. The unity envisioned in a personalistic ontology is not one of whole and parts, of ultimate Being and its personal centers. It is a unity of a Purposer and Nature, but not a unity of Person and persons. In and through the predictable order of Nature, the cosmic Person sustains and guides the finite persons whom he creates as free agents. This freedom God never abrogates.

Thus, within the larger unity of God's purpose, finite persons are free within limits, to use God's world and their lives in a way consonant with, or contrary to, God's will for men. Men cannot change the ultimate ontic unity which sustains them and Nature. But in every moral, rational and religious venture, a larger unity of purpose can be forged—a unity of moral purpose and fellowship, impossible without God's aid, but rooted in man's use of freedom.

## VI

Reality, as conceived by Borden Parker Bowne, is an ontic unity of Person and Nature devoted to the created realm of persons. Persons in turn reach fulfillment in God's world only by their responsive and co-operative fellowship with each other and with God. Any truth of science, metaphysics, ethics, or theology is the venture of personal minds in interaction with each other within the purposed, creative, dependable energizing

<sup>25</sup> *Theism*, p. 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

of the cosmic Person. Any true value is grounded in God's response to their co-operative and creative use of their God-given abilities and the world. Bowne's underlying critique of both philosophy and theology is that they both forget their roots in the far-reaching demands of personal life when they pontificate to each other rather than accept partnership for deepening and enlarging the creative thrust which is one with being a person. The aim of Bowne's personalism in philosophy and theology was to keep every source of value and fact in constant interaction. For without such creative intercourse, culture decays and persons die.

# The Role of Self-Interest in Politics

## *The Biblical Fable of the Trees and the Bramble*

DON K. MCKEE

And . . . Jotham . . . lifted up his voice, and . . . said unto them . . . The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.

And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

(Judges 9:7-15)

### I

JOTHAM'S FABLE about the trees and the bramble is one of the most forthright statements on politics in biblical literature. Yet it remains practically unknown as a reference for popular civic exhortation and is largely ignored in Christian circles of the present and past. That the passage has been neglected in this way is a tragedy. For the message which the fable conveys is significant. As an appeal for participation in politics, it is a gem. Without interpretation of any sort, its message is immediately clear. When people shirk civic responsibilities, evil triumphs!

Jotham enunciated this principle at the climax of a series of dramatic political events, occurrences with as modern a flavor as anything in contemporary history. His story about the trees and the bramble was a rigorous attack upon a man who had just been made king, a person named Abimelech. This new monarch was Jotham's elder brother. Yet Jotham's censure of his kinsman was hardly unexpected. For in order to take power, Abimelech had slaughtered all of Jotham's other brothers, sixty-six individuals to be

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exact. (His father, Gideon, "had many wives," the book of Judges explains.)

What made this massacre possible was mainly the political naïveté of Abimelech's other brothers following the death of their father, the previous leader of Israel. After burying the old man, Abimelech had persuaded his relatives to give up their claims to the government and to trust him with total power. He even succeeded in inducing them to appeal on his behalf to the citizens of the community by publicly posing the question, "Is it better for you . . . that all the sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon), which are three-score and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you, remembering also that I am your bone and your flesh?" This argument his kinsmen gullibly repeated throughout the community. After campaigning for him, they even gave Abimelech money to establish himself. Convinced that he was "Big Brother" ("Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother."), the relatives then withdrew from the political arena without even bothering to check the governmental authority which they had just helped create.

Abimelech, however, like contemporary dictators, made certain that there would be neither loyal nor disloyal opposition from his benefactors. Taking their "threescore and ten pieces of silver," he went out and "hired vain and light persons, which followed him." With these mercenaries, he then turned upon those who had so simply trusted him and, in a horrible blood bath, purged them.

Jotham's fable was an interpretation of these events. A bramble had taken power, he said, because the other plants had refused to assume political responsibility. Unquestionably, Jotham meant his parable as a scorching assault upon the new tyrant. But the message of the fable transcends the particular events which gave rise to its enunciation. Its conclusion, that great evil results when men do not participate responsibly in politics, applies to the twentieth century as much as it does to the Hebraic past. To bow out of civic obligations is to assure the coming of tyranny!

Thomas Mann, out of bitter experiences, spoke similar words to our generation. Politics, he held early in his career, does not concern the artist. But such a position, Mann soon found out, generates only Hitlers, large and small. As a result of this lesson the German novelist changed his views. Politics, he began to insist with the ancient Jotham, constitutes a realm of public morality in which even the artist must take part. Otherwise oppression and chaos are assured; for the neutrality of the writer will do nothing to halt the rise of social malignancies.

But to validate this thesis does not require reference only to countries

with authoritarian regimes. Even in our democracy political machines often control nominations, because so few citizens take the trouble to vote in primary elections. Sinister interests frequently dominate party organization, because the rank and file stays home and refuses to be active in precinct and municipal activities. Similarly, most corporate shareholders do not take the trouble to attend stockholders' meetings in order to exercise controls over the directors of our modern business enterprises. Rather, like the sixty-six brothers, they pay their "threescore and ten pieces of silver" to the corporation for stock, give some Abimelech the authority to cast their proxy votes for them, and then bow out of any further responsibility—except to draw their dividends. Some unfortunate examples of labor leadership stem from the same attitude in the trade union movement. Too many workers are satisfied to accept all the benefits which unionism brings but never bother to attend meetings, take part in organizational elections, or help make the policy decisions of the local and national units.

## II

Whenever the olive trees, figs, and grapevines refuse to accept political obligations, it seems, the brambles take over. But why is this so? Unfortunately Jotham did not say. Explanation of the matter is left to conjecture—and to the philosophers.

Perhaps two interpretations of Jotham's principle are possible. One is based upon an idealistic approach to politics which is grounded essentially on an optimistic view of man's nature. The other is more realistic, in that it recognizes elements in the human character which make the achievement of ideal ends difficult.

The first explanation assumes that good men may be found in the civic arena and that politics is a contest between these virtuous people and opposing evil men. The trees are the righteous; the brambles are the corrupt. Somehow, in other words, certain men have overcome the self-interest which continues to contaminate the others. If these morally excellent people refrain from participating in politics, the wicked men obviously will assume power, impose their selfish interests upon the entire community, and establish tyranny. To prevent the unrighteous from taking over the government, the righteous must therefore become active in civic affairs in order to vanquish the evil forces. The optimism of this explanation plainly lies in its presupposition that some people have the capacity to eliminate the self-love which is held to characterize mankind in general.

This version of politics was first stated most clearly by Plato. All

men he divided into two major groupings: an elite which has surmounted the evils of self-interest; and the stupid masses who are tainted with the desire for personal advantage. Since Plato recognized that all power is perverted by those who put their private concerns before the public good, he insisted that governmental authority should go only to those who have eradicated self-interest. The results of nonparticipation by morally superior people, consequently, are disastrous. "The punishment good citizens get for neglecting their politics," he once said, "is to be governed by bad men."

This explanation of civic life in terms of good versus evil individuals may have been the interpretation which Jotham had in mind. It certainly is the most simple explanation of the fable. But it is interesting to notice that, while the parable associates the bramble with evil, there is nothing explicit in the story which identifies the other trees with goodness. Even when the fig tree presumptuously calls attention to the purity of its own position—its "sweetness" and "good fruit"—Jotham's narration does not support it in this proud claim.

In fact it is possible to explain the fable's conclusion, that evil results from widespread nonparticipation, with less optimistic presuppositions. Such an interpretation realistically denies that political contests represent a struggle between good men on the one hand and evil persons on the other. Rather, it assumes that no men completely overcome self-interest in politics. It sees the civic struggle as an encounter between contenders, all of whom have the taint of biased perspectives, limited insights, and self-centeredness. Its main stress is that nowhere in politics are men so exempt from these partial claims that they constitute disinterested centers of virtue. The bramble, in other words, may be narrow and corrupt. Yet this is not to say that the other plants are devoid of shortcomings of a similar character.

But if the vine, fig, and olive tree also represent particular interests, why should the thesis be advanced that their participation is necessary to improve matters? The answer of the realists is that political power is always most dangerous when based upon a single interest. If only the bramble wields power, its might provides the opportunity to impose on the other trees its fractional insights and narrow claims. The result of arming only a single interest with inordinate power is thus to impose upon everyone something that is less than the truth and certainly short of goodness.

On the other hand, when the competing interests of the vine, fig, and olive trees enter into the political arena, they provide resistance to the avarice of the bramble. By taking part in community life and supporting their own particular aspirations with power, they contribute something of

a check to the might of the bramble. Because the interests of the trees differ from those of the thorn bush, they thus add new perspectives to the political realm—insights and demands which would be ignored if the outlook of the bramble alone predominated. If, moreover, the trees are able to organize sufficient strength to block the aggressions of the bramble, a balance of power, insight, and interest may ensue. This will provide greater consideration for the needs and liberties of all the plants than would result from letting the bramble alone exercise authority.

Thus widespread civic participation is necessary, because political decisions based upon the competition of several limited insights usually embody a greater approximation of the truth than decisions resting upon only a single interest. Furthermore, the balance of interest and power that results from such widespread participation assures a more just society than does a broad political withdrawal that allows one interest to wield total and unrestrained authority.

One of the best spokesmen for this realistic interpretation of politics was the American Calvinist, James Madison, "the Father of the United States Constitution." Rejecting the idea that civic life is a contest in which good men contend against evil men, Madison insisted that nowhere do angels govern mankind. "Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens," he wrote; and "the most powerful faction . . . must be expected to prevail" and to oppress the weaker. This is because, "as long as the reason of man continues fallible, and . . . as long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves." Consequently, since men are not immune from the perversions of self-interest, "no man is allowed to be a judge in his own cause, because his interest will certainly bias his judgment and, not improbably, corrupt his integrity." Political power, in other words, is not to be the monopoly of any one particular interest.

Government based upon a single interest must be prevented, Madison stressed, because otherwise justice—which he called "the end of government"—cannot prevail. Supreme authority, by either an individual or "a majority united by a common interest," must be avoided. To preclude government by a single-interest majority, Madison proposed that the sphere of the American republic be enlarged so that no one "faction" could become a majority and use the state to impose its partial claims on the entire society. For electoral victory, several conflicting interest groups would then have to co-operate in order to constitute a majority. This necessity for working

together would cause them to moderate their demands, compromise their extreme views, and work out some sort of balance between their opposing programs. Thus "in the extended republic of the United States, and among the great variety of interests, parties, and sects which it embraces, a coalition of a majority of the whole society could seldom take place on any other principles than those of justice and the general good . . ."

Participation by every interest in the process of politics was thus seen by Madison as imperative in order to provide restraints on any one selfish faction. Today, of course, this is exactly the moderating role which presidential elections play in our nation. For to win the office of chief executive, it is necessary for several conflicting interest groups to unite—a process which requires them to hammer out some accommodation between their opposing claims and to construct a policy platform which both partially supports and partially resists the demands of each particular faction.

The task of achieving a just society, therefore, always involves both the participation and "the regulation of these various and interfering interests," Madison held. "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition," and colliding interests must be so balanced that "each may be a check on the other." In short:

It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, . . . you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. [Therefore, to control those who exercise political power, it is necessary to adopt a] . . . policy of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives . . .<sup>1</sup>

### III

These two interpretations of Jotham's fable are so divergent that a choice between them appears necessary. Yet, upon analysis, shortcomings are apparent in both approaches.

The defects of the optimistic theory are perhaps most obvious. The logic of its underlying assumption—that some men are righteous and politics is therefore a struggle between good and evil men—is a formula for all the evils which spring from self-righteousness. It calls for the creation of absolute power, fosters intolerance, and makes opposition parties impossible.

The role of optimism in creating theoretical foundations for political

<sup>1</sup> This whole series of quotations appears in *The Federalist*, Nos. 10 and 51.

absolutism springs from the exceptions which it insists upon making to the general political maxim that all power is dangerous. It is the self-interest of those who exercise authority which of course makes power hazardous to the freedom and welfare of others. But when optimistic theories assert that some men are immune from concern for their own private advantage, it follows that this select group may be trusted to wield power justly without any necessity for restraints upon their activities. Thus, the concept that the fig, vine, and olive tree are lacking in self-interest provides a moral justification for giving them unchecked might to assure the triumph of their "virtuous" way in the social order.

The trouble with this approach is that no men are actually good enough to exercise such irresponsible power. Once in authority, a fig, olive, or vine turns out to have vested interests of one kind or another, just as the bramble did. Giving such men absolute power, therefore, merely provides them with the capacity to suppress the freedom of everyone else and to impose their private advantage upon the political community. It thus leads to tyranny.

As a matter of fact, rule by the "good" trees may actually turn out to be worse than the undisguised tyrannical government of the bramble. When, in Jotham's fable, the latter had authority, it did not claim that its private interests represented universal values. Being morally cynical, the bramble quite frankly told the other trees to "put your trust in my shadow," rather than in some assured personal virtue. This failure of the bramble to make an explicit claim to universal goodness at least avoids the peril of disguising his oppressive selfishness as moral virtue.

But when the "good" trees replace the evil shrub, the vested interests which they carry with them to the seats of power are clothed in the false robes of an assumed purity. It is this which fosters intolerance. The resulting identification of one partial political position with unqualified righteousness makes it impossible for the new ruling group to tolerate any interests or perspectives which oppose theirs; for all such divergent claims, since they differ from the position of the "good" people in power, become by definition the personification of evil. The "men of virtue," it follows, have a moral obligation to demolish these sources of "corruption" and unorthodoxy.

This intolerance, of course, makes an opposition party impossible. If the "party of the trees" is absolutely right and the "party of the shrubs" is totally wrong, a concern for moral values logically means that the shrubs cannot be permitted to exercise power. The consequence of such an assumption is to insist upon an authoritarian single-party system, for political

associations which negate truth and virtue obviously are not fit to assume governmental responsibility.

The contrary wisdom of democracy is that it assumes each party to be somewhat right and at the same time somewhat wrong. When such presuppositions prevail, those in the minority are able to abide the temporary rule of the majority party and, through criticism and dissent, serve to remind the majority that its grasp on wisdom and moral correctness is limited.

Recent attacks upon the Democrats in the United States as "the party of treason"—or upon the Republicans as the agency of depression and economic wickedness—represent contemporary examples of the danger which springs from viewing politics as a sharply defined encounter between pure and impure factions. For, logically, this sort of attack implies the imperative of having one-party government by the electoral organization whose skirts are supposedly untainted, whether the taint be disloyalty in the one case or economic sin in the other.

Modern communism is unquestionably the most dramatic example of how absolutism, intolerance, and the destruction of opposition parties follow from excessively optimistic assumptions. As stated by Marx, self-interest arises only from the corruptions wrought by the private ownership of the means of production. This presupposition permitted him to divide capitalist society into two morally antagonistic classes: the bourgeoisie, whose insights and power are contaminated by vested interests in property; and the proletariat which, because it does not have such interests, is supposed to be a disinterested and virtuous group. Marx's insistence that the working class is exempt from the corruption which characterizes other people led him to assert that it should be given absolute power through revolution to eradicate all evidences of selfishness in society.

As modified by Lenin, the Communist party (rather than the proletariat) became this center of goodness. Later Stalin narrowed the "redeemed" sector of humanity still further by taking the position that not the entire party, but only its leadership constitutes the moral elite. The tyranny which has resulted from these developments clearly reveals the jeopardy which lies in assuming that any segment of the human race is exempt from self-love.

#### IV

Yet difficulties also arise from the second interpretation of Jotham's fable. The main hazard in this approach to politics, which insists upon the self-interest of all men, is that it may fail to differentiate morally between

the various interests competing for power. The emphasis that neither the bramble nor the trees are free from the desire for private advantage may blur some of the obvious differences between the two.

Even when the dangerous view of politics as a struggle between angels and devils is rejected, perils thus remain in a political approach which perceives the social scene to be characterized by a contest merely between one devil and another devil. The political sphere, as a matter of fact, seldom presents us with equally evil alternatives in this fashion. Even when one realizes that no men are angels and that all centers of power are tainted by self-interest, it is still necessary to make ethical distinctions between one interest and another.

In most political controversies, the demands of one contender may contribute more to the common good than those of its competitors. Such an interest group clearly deserves special provisional support. Since the character of the justice resulting from every balance of power depends in part upon which interests lie behind the major counterweights, the place in the balance of those associations, whose partial claims serve more universal ends, should be strengthened. It certainly is morally preferable that such groups play a larger role in the balance than other forces whose interests work for more narrow advantage. Unless the better of several competing interests is given this kind of support, the common good will suffer.

One of the chief tasks in politics, in fact, is to determine which associations of men—in seeking their own private advantage—unwittingly serve more universal ends. Many such organizations do indeed exist. For example, when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People works to protect its membership by seeking to eliminate segregation in the public schools, it obviously serves the welfare of the entire nation. This follows, if for no other reason, because the termination of such discrimination makes democracy more attractive to the uncommitted peoples of Asia who happen to be largely colored. Similarly, organized labor has contributed to America by the social legislation which the interests of its membership lead it to champion.

It is well to remember too that moral discrimination of this sort actually would be impossible if politics were only a struggle between mere devils; for devils are incapable of making moral choices. Too rigorous an insistence upon the self-centeredness of men logically makes concern for such values as order and freedom impossible. Since ethical distinctions are in fact made and constitute one of the elements in politics, it is evident that man is not

a creature of such complete self-love as ultra-pessimists have maintained.

## V

Thus the optimism of the first interpretation of Jotham's fable suffers from all the perils of self-righteousness which result from viewing politics merely as strife between good and evil men. Similarly, the pessimism of the second explanation runs the risk of degenerating into dangerous cynicism when its preoccupation with the self-interest of all groups blinds it to the differences which actually exist between competing interests.

What is fascinating about these two versions of the parable in *Judges* is that each interpretation is required to correct the shortcomings of the other. The realism of the second explanation is needed to rectify the idealism of the first—and vice versa.

Thus the realistic insistence, that all politics is a contention between men with partial interests, is necessary to remedy the self-righteousness which springs from the optimistic view of human nature lying at the base of idealism. Realism thereby instructs those who think they are virtuous that they are not as virtuous as they think—and consequently cannot be trusted with unchecked power.

Likewise, the idealism of the first interpretation, which emphasizes that moral differences do exist in politics, is indispensable to save the realists in the second approach from cynicism. Idealism thus informs those who insist no political contender is exempt from self-interest that, despite this, moral distinctions must still be made between competing egoistic forces.

Thus in politics it is always necessary to differentiate between trees and brambles and, indeed, between the claims of one tree and another. It is essential to give provisional moral support to some trees in their struggles against the brambles. But the trees will never be exempt from something of the same taint of self-interest which characterizes the bramble bush, and the moral differences between these contenders will never be as great as the trees imagine. Even the best of the trees will never be as "sweet" as it fancies, nor bear as "good fruit" as it claims.

While the brambles, therefore, cannot be trusted with unrestrained power, neither can any of the trees. The best possible social achievement, consequently, will probably be a balance of power organized by the trees in which they check the worst aggressions of the brambles but are in turn incapable of becoming tyrannical themselves because of the opposing power directed against them. Such a balance, obviously, will be impossible without the participation of the trees. So, after all, Jotham was correct.

# *Religion and the Arts*

## *The Sickness of an Affluent Society*

ROBERT E. FITCH

THE SICKNESS of an affluent society is self-pity. A poor people cannot afford this luxury. When life is hard and cruel, every energy is needed for survival. It is only the affluent who have the leisure to elaborate the skills which go into the art of self-pity.

When self-pity is rabid, it is Angry. When it is rotten, it is Beat. But whether it speaks in a snarl, or in a whine, its appetite for compassion is illimitable. The more it is fed, the greater it grows. In time we learn to take delight in this our disease, to call it health rather than sickness, and to give special rewards to those doctors and artists and priests and politicians who may best celebrate its symptoms. Upon the most talented of these we could even bestow a Pulitzer Prize or a Nobel Prize.

### *HAMLET IN GETHSEMANE*

An affluent society, when it is deep in its sickness, will corrupt Shakespeare to its own image. During the past season John Neville did so in his rendering of Hamlet for the Old Vic company. Hamlet, who should be tragic, was portrayed as merely pathetic. It is true that there is a relative innocence in Shakespeare's Hamlet; that, more than a Lear, an Othello, a Macbeth, he is the victim of unkind contingencies. Nevertheless, as Shakespeare sees him, he is not pathetic. Ophelia is pathetic; Hamlet is tragic. There may be moments when he lacerates himself with self-pity; but, for the better part, he is still a man in courage and in intelligence, and stands erect in human dignity before the slings and arrows of outrageous circumstance.

This demeaning of the tragic to the merely pathetic is the vice of our times. We might call it the "pathetic fallacy" if Ruskin had not already appropriated that phrase for another purpose. But under whatever rubric,

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it has three aspects. The self is not a hero responsible in some measure for gain or loss to his life, but is the helpless victim of events over which he has no control and against which he can bear no manly witness. The self is a solitary soul—standing in isolation from the realm of meaning that is almost absolute, as it is cut off from God, cut off from nature, cut off from society, cut off from all principle or purpose, cut off eventually from its own self. Beholding this self in another, we are not, as in tragedy, awe-struck by its dignity or even its majesty so that we would not presume to be so familiar as to offer consolation; but we are moved to pity, and with a desire to give comfort, and even by an impulse to stroke it soothingly on the head and to say, "How sad! How sad!"

It was therefore with a sound instinct that Pasternak put first in the group of poems at the end of *Dr. Zhivago* his own "Hamlet." But here an extraordinary transformation has taken place. Hamlet has become the Christ! It is a self-righteous Christ: "I stand alone. All else is swamped by Pharisaism." Certainly this is not the voice of Jesus of Nazareth, even in the time of his extremity. It is the voice of the self-pitying egotist who is modern man. Hamlet, moreover, stands like Christ in his Garden of Gethsemane: "If thou be willing, Abba, Father, Remove this cup from me."<sup>1</sup> It is curious only that the rest of the prayer—"Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will . . ." is not uttered with equal clarity and conviction but is lost in a vague gesture of acquiescence.

It is important to grasp the radical romanticism that goes into making the character of this Russian Hamlet. The one reality is Life. Christianity with its Easter festival may speak of the reality of life and death and resurrection. But we are atheist Christians: we know the Son of Man but not the Son of God.<sup>2</sup> So we applaud the modesty in metaphysics of a Pushkin or a Chekhov, who take life for what it is, but do not press on to ultimate issues.<sup>3</sup> Nature, even more than religion, speaks eloquently of life—in moonlight and river and forest and gentle wind, in field and sky and cloud and earth, in the bitter dry twig, in the frost-bitten apple, in the rowan tree. Nature, which is wordless, becomes articulate in the person of Lara. For Lara is Life. Lara is the rowan tree, whose white branches are gathered about me like her strong white arms and yield me a benediction of warmth even under the covering of the snow.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pasternak, B., *Doctor Zhivago*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1958, p. 523. Quotations used by permission of the publisher.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 375, 391, 501.

Having life we should live it directly, and not be diverted nor be disciplined by plans, or programs, or principles, or politics, or other such "immature fantasies" and "schoolboy escapades." Says Dr. Zhivago to his Lara, "Man is born to live, not to prepare for life."<sup>5</sup> Almost half a century ago an American seer spoke a similar message: "I like to do 'most everything that's *living*. Of course I don't like the other things very well . . . But they aren't living . . . Aunt . . . says they're 'learning to live' . . . But I don't see it that way at all. I don't think you have to *learn* how to live. I didn't, anyhow."<sup>6</sup> The name of this seer: Pollyanna.

In fact Dr. Zhivago is the romantic individualist, the artist-anarchist, who can never be at home in any system of public responsibility, communist or capitalist. "Politics doesn't appeal to me. I don't like people who don't care about the truth."<sup>7</sup> The words are supposed to be spoken in Soviet Russia, but one has heard their supercilious inflection in democratic societies. Apparently it was the great work of Christ that he abolished politics. According to Sima, the first miracle was in Moses, who gave us the people and the leader and the law. But all this was done away in the second miracle when we had, not at first Christ, but "a girl . . . quietly, secretly bringing forth a child, bringing forth life, bringing forth the miracle of life, the 'universal life,' as He was afterwards called." It was then that "the duty . . . to live unanimously as a people, as a whole nation, was abolished. Leaders and nations were relegated to the past. They were replaced by the doctrine of individuality and freedom."<sup>8</sup> With Christ—as with Lara—we have only to be, to be free, to be persons, to live, to love, and, perchance, to suffer.

At the moment the suffering is intolerable. Life now is "under sentence."<sup>9</sup> "Reality has been so terrorized that it is hiding."<sup>10</sup> There is left only the lonely soul, shivering in isolation, or perhaps in company with a single loved one. So Lara speaks to the Doctor as the end approaches:

The whole human way of life has been destroyed and ruined. All that's left is the naked human soul stripped to the last shred, for which nothing has changed because it was always cold and shivering and reaching out to its nearest neighbor, as cold and lonely as itself. You and I are like Adam and Eve, the first two people on earth who at the beginning of the world had nothing to cover themselves with—and now at the end of it we are just as naked and homeless.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 297.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, E. H., *Pollyanna*, Boston: L. C. Page Co., n.d., pp. 156f.

<sup>7</sup> *Doctor Zhivago*, p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 412f.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 402f.

Whether or not the human soul was *always* cold and shivering is precisely the question. But one could not find better evidence of the insatiable imperialism of this sort of self-pity than that, in flagrant violation of the whole biblical intent, it should reduce Adam and Eve to figures of pathos!

Man, then, against this absurd universe and hostile society, is but a pathetic particle. He is born in pathos; he lives in pathos; he peters out in pathos. For all the fine talk about freedom and personality, it is just the absence of any robust personality that marks the narrative of *Doctor Zhivago*. Toward the end, so the text tells us, the Doctor "went more and more to seed."<sup>12</sup> As for Lara, she simply disappears. The identity of either one, like that of other characters in the story, had often been lost in a flow of conversation where we lose track of who is speaking. Is this because the individual vanishes into the universal? If so, it is a universal not of human nature, but of nature; or rather, it is the universal of an abstract, impersonal life force which is neither human nor natural. The proper outcome of this pilgrim's progress in pathos is the evaporation of the individual.

#### JOB DISPLACES THE PROPHETS

The American version of the solitary, innocent, suffering soul is Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.* (I speak from the book, not from the play in production.) It has the toughness of temper and a literary merit which separate it from the Russian tale. The verse is lean and spare; God as well as Satan appears in power; and *J.B.* is not diminished in his manhood at the end. Nevertheless the essentials are present. Each book with its theme is the product of an affluent society. One society has fallen; the other still increases. Richard Powers in *The Antioch Review*<sup>13</sup> has shown how Dr. Zhivago really looks back with regret upon the irresponsible privileges and comforts of tsarist times. As for *J.B.*, like Job in the Bible, it is obvious that to undergo this kind of anguish one must have power and prosperity and prestige to begin with. Indeed, it is inconceivable that such a poem could be written in an economy where scarcity is the common lot.

The change that has come over our culture at this point is of the profoundest spiritual significance. The gist of it is that we find our symbol and our spokesman not in the prophets but in Job. This is the difference between the United States of the 1930's and the United States of the 1950's. With the prophets our compassion is directed outward to a suffering society. With Job our pity is directed inward to a pathetic self. In the first instance

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>13</sup> Summer, 1959, pp. 224ff.

we are concerned with a wrong done to others. In the second instance, with a wrong done to our own persons. The irony of the situation is that, when we are really suffering the severest deprivations, we become capable of generous sympathies; but, when we are wallowing in affluence, we begin to nurse resentment against the deity for every least failure to maintain us in the style of living to which recently we have become accustomed.

If God in *J.B.* has a more articulate character than in *Doctor Zhivago*, this is to enable him to serve as the villain of the piece. Nickles' readiness to play the role of *J.B.* as much as that of Satan indicates that man and the devil have much in common in their understanding of the anguish of existence. The villainy of God, however, is not an overt villainy. It is his "cold complacence,"<sup>14</sup> his failure to be the loving Father that he ought to be: "He does not love. He Is."<sup>15</sup> His countenance appears in the skies of stone, in staring stars that are only lights not meant for man. On the other hand, in *J.B.*, as in *Doctor Zhivago*, it is proper to find comfort in Nature—the forsythia, the green leaves in the wood, the wind on the water. This is not the objective nature of Newton, with its laws, or of Darwin, with its struggle. It is nature interpreted according to Ruskin's pathetic fallacy—a sweet and gentle and warmth-giving spirit. One may sentimentalize nature, but not sentimentalize God. We reject in his austerity the Father God; we turn once more to Mother Nature. This is metaphysical Momism.

Of course *J.B.* suffers in innocence. His cry is the universal cry of the wounded ego: "Why should they do this to *me*?" In all that occurs he has "not even the consciousness of crime to comfort him."<sup>16</sup> Being a man, he wills to accept full responsibility for his life, and so he rejects the "defiling innocence" proffered to him by Eliphaz the psychoanalyst.<sup>17</sup> And yet the question continues insistent as it is expressed by his wife Sarah after the death in an automobile accident of two of their children:

Why did He do it to them?  
What had they done to Him—those children . . .  
What had they done to Him . . . and we—  
What had *we* done? . . .<sup>18</sup>

The premise behind this sort of question is that man ought to be living in the kind of universe where all should minister to his deserts and necessities as in the maternal womb. The naïveté of its grasp of the realities

<sup>14</sup> MacLeish, A., *J.B.: A Play in Verse*, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1959, p. 20. Quotations used by permission of the publishers.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

of God, or of Nature, or of Human Nature is so abysmal that, within the given context, it is altogether impossible to cope adequately with the issue.

As Dr. Zhivago is alone with his Lara, so is J.B. alone with his Sarah. The final resort of both parties is to "blow on the coal of the heart."<sup>19</sup> Dr. Zhivago and Lara do so in desperation, but J.B. and Sarah in hope. Yet both parties put their faith finally in a truncated humanism in which one trusts not in God, not even in nature, certainly not in humanity nor in society, but just in poor little you and me. Lara makes explicit the new idolatry in one of her concluding remarks to the Doctor: "Yurochka! "Yurochka! How wise you are! You know everything, you divine everything, Yurochka, you are my strength and my refuge."<sup>20</sup> And then because she is aware of what it means to take the words of the psalmist and turn them from Jehovah to Yurochka, she adds, "God forgive me the blasphemy." This, then, is our new Savior—Dr. Zhivago, or J.B.! A pathetic idol!

Blow on the coal of the heart! Not the heart of humanity, but just your heart and my heart, because that's all the heart there is. Yet in *Doctor Zhivago* it is his heart that fails. So he drags out his last days in obscurity and pathos. The heart of J.B., or the heart of Sarah, it would seem, is a stouter heart. Perhaps it may glow with a more enduring radiance. One only wonders why, except for the single loved one, it is resolved to be such a solitary heart—especially when Nickles assures us that there are "millions and millions of mankind" who are Job, that "There never could have been so many / Suffered more for less."<sup>21</sup> This being so much alone and cut off from all comforters in heaven or in human fellowship—is it a constraint thrust upon the heart by a cold and careless fate, or is it the willful sulking in the corner of the self-indulgent soul?

#### THE DEBAUCH OF SELF-PITY

Naturally there is no arguing with this self-pity. There is no overcoming its triumphant *ad hominem*. With what a cloud of witnesses is its testimony maintained! And these witnesses come from the ends of the earth—from the north and from the south, from the left and from the right. At this point secularist and pietist, conservative and radical, are one in conviction. The very best minds, the most eloquent voices of the age are here. Indeed, do they not "speak to the condition of our times"? Who would dare to challenge this authority? William S. White attacks such

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>20</sup> *Doctor Zhivago*, pp. 427f.

<sup>21</sup> *J.B.*, p. 12.

effrontery when he turns from his usual treatment of politics in *Harper's Magazine* to consider the greater theme. Sensing correctly that there is a kinship between Pasternak and MacLeish, he summons us to confront "the cold, dreadful blast of things as they really are," and to accept the "plain fact that this is, most of the time, simply a hell of a life." It is the confrontation with this fact, he tells us, which "divides the men from the boys," which separates the "front-line people" from the "safer people back in the Zone of the Interior."<sup>22</sup>

Well, then, which is the boy? And does this separate the front-line soldier from the safe people back of the line; or does it just separate the front-line soldier from the front-line correspondent? Is this truly the word of the participant in suffering, or is it the word of the spectator of suffering who arrogates to himself the anguish but does not know the inner meaning of the ordeal? Mr. Zuss—if God may be allowed to get in a word—had an expression for this fellow: "the honest, disillusioned man" with his "turd of truth."<sup>23</sup>

The classical answer to the classical problem of human suffering is not found in the Book of Job. In the biblical record it appears in Jeremiah, in Hosea, in the Isaiah who was the poet of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, and in the Christ. It appears elsewhere in a Socrates and in a Gotama. In these traditions there is no startled discovery, for the first time, of the fact of suffering, with loud outcry against its injustice and indignity. Such naïveté belongs to Candide. But in these traditions suffering, whether in guilt or in innocence, is taken as a primary fact of life. The answer to the issue is not directed to the intellect. A devout agnosticism will not presume to dissipate the absurdity of an ultimate mystery. The answer is directed to the will. It is the business of religion to show man how to build upon the fact of suffering and yet win through to some achievement in courage and compassion, in serenity or in joy, in faith and hope and love.

However, for those who will yet wallow in their slough of despond, if they are contemptuous of supernatural remedies, there may be vouchsafed to them an earthly. For there is on this earth a people scornful of self-pity and not lavish with pity toward others. It is a tough people, a Spartan people, confident of its god and certain of its destiny. And if we must make our people effete with self-pity, then this other people, though a cruel people, will inherit the land as surely as the living displace the dead.

<sup>22</sup> April, 1959, pp. 77, 78, 80.

<sup>23</sup> *J.B.*, p. 11.

## Book Reviews and Notices

**John Wesley's Theology Today.** By COLIN W. WILLIAMS. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 252 pp. \$4.50.

The avowed purpose of this book is to determine what God gave Methodism at the point of her origin which she may share as her unique contribution to the ecumenical dialogue now in progress. To achieve this end the author has moved in two directions: a historical study of the theology of John Wesley, and an appraisal of what constitutes the unique contribution of Methodism to said dialogue.

Both efforts are outstanding: the former as a success and the latter as a failure. It is difficult to see how the author could see as clearly as he does into the nature and genius of Wesley's thoughts, and be as blind as he is both to the nature of Methodism and the meaning of unity in the ecumenical movements of our time.

So far as historical theology is concerned, the author makes a series of important points: (1) Wesley was vitally concerned about what he regarded as correct theological thinking. (2) While Wesley refused to limit theological thought to any fixed number of doctrines, or even to any particular interpretation of central doctrines, several recur with such frequency in his writings that we must regard them as basic to his own thinking, namely, "original sin, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith alone, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity." (3) Wesley did not intend that these should divide Christians; rather he felt that a just appraisal of them would further unity in the Christian witness. (4) Wesley did not require adherence to any particular formulation of even these fundamentals as a condition of entrance into the Methodist Society, but, once in, a person was steadily and surely "exposed" to them. (5) For Wesley, "true religion consists in the living relationship to God, made alive in us by the Holy Spirit who comes to us through the witness of the revelation in Jesus Christ, recorded in the Scripture, proclaimed in preaching, and practiced in the fellowship of the church."

Six of the eleven chapters in the book are spent developing various aspects of Wesley's thought on salvation; three others fill in the picture of what men are saved from (original sin as well as plain sin), how they are saved (atonement), and the fellowship of those who are saved (the church). All in all, this book gives us one of the fullest and most readable treatments now available of Wesley's thoughts on the perennially important themes.

Unfortunately, several errors weaken whatever contribution the author hopes to make to the ecumenical dialogue in our time.

To begin with, he thinks of "the movement back to unity" as being the thrust of the ecumenical effort. We have never had any more than fictional unity in the Christian church in history. The New Testament rings with dissension and conflict on matters of faith and order alike. The ecumenical movement is not trying to recover something we once had but have now lost; it is trying to realize in history the constant vision of the felt oneness of all Christians in Christ. Strictly speaking, it is the "movement *ahead* toward unity."

The penchant for the backward look comes out repeatedly as the author proceeds. He insists "that the authoritative documents of present-day Methodism still

make the theology of John Wesley the official standard of Methodist doctrine." This simply is not true to the facts. The *Discipline of The Methodist Church* does list the Articles of Religion to which Wesley gave consent (but which he did not invent); yet it gives The Methodist Church the right to amend even the rule which protects these articles. And, in actual administration, The Methodist Church assumes and/or ignores them. They are not mentioned in the ordination of deacon, elder, or bishop. When one is admitted to membership in an Annual Conference, he is asked whether he knows and will keep the General Rules of the Church and whether he believes "the doctrines of The Methodist Church to be in harmony with the Holy Scripture" and will "preach and maintain them." But beyond these general questions, The Methodist Church does not go, though the Conference Board of Ministerial Training may quiz the candidate on them if that board so desires.

As a matter of actual fact, no candidate for orders in The Methodist Church is asked whether he believes in either Wesley's theology or Wesley's interpretation of Christian theology. It is one thing for a candidate to say he believes in the doctrines of The Methodist Church and quite another to add, or infer, "as understood by John Wesley." This latter phrase would itself have to be supplemented by a further explanatory phrase like "as interpreted by Colin Williams" or someone else. But these latter qualifying phrases are not added. It is, therefore, inexcusable for Dr. Williams or anyone else to talk about Wesley's ideas as though they were "authoritative documents of present-day Methodism" and speak of "the original (and still legally binding) Methodist tradition . . ." There simply isn't any such "thing" in Methodism.

Fortunately, the informed historian in Dr. Williams is usually able to master the doctrine-hungry theologian that also inhabits and inhibits his nature. The historian knows Wesley too well to rivet some one of several possible interpretations of doctrine upon him. Methodists from Wesley's day to our own have felt free to do just what the British Methodist Conference did in 1946 when it sought to suggest "The Message and Mission of Methodism," or what Dr. Williams does when he suggests the need to redefine some of Wesley's doctrinal terms. If we are at liberty to do these things—and we always have been and we continue to be—we are also at liberty to decide which of Wesley's ideas we want to keep, which to modify, and which to discard.

The Methodist Church is nourished by John Wesley, not limited to him. If we want to know what The Methodist Church believes we go to the fellowship called Methodists and ask them, not to Wesley and ask him. If we want to know what The Methodist Church should believe (and can justify our raising the question in that form) we go to the same fellowship, not to John Wesley.

*The locus of reality in The Methodist Church is not John Wesley, or even the demonstrated tradition of being connected with him, but The Methodist Church as it actually worships, lives, and seeks to serve its Lord today.* This is where our true unity with other churches is to be found—in the reality, vitality, and validity before God of the religious experience of those who find God in Jesus Christ and seek to bear their witness to him. But the locus of reality is here and now. We do not measure the validity of the existing church by asking that it square with tradition, but we do determine the vitality of tradition by asking whether or not it nourishes the life and the work of the church today. Historic tradition and existing institutions need each other and cannot be understood apart from each other, but the locus of validation of the witness of the church lies in the life and work of the existing institution. And

these are known by their "fruits" in life. The Methodist Church, like every other great church tradition, faces forward, not backward, on this matter.

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**The Freedom of the Will.** By AUSTIN FARRER. (Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, 1957.) New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960. 330 pp. \$4.95.

Can there be room for another book about freedom? Have not philosophers and theologians been writing about it for twenty-five centuries or more? Was not another series of Gifford Lectures published only recently with the theme, "For Faith and Freedom"? But it is to be doubted whether any recent book has been both as comprehensive, as contemporary—placing problems in their modern light—and as readable as this. Farrer's book differs from Hodgson's in being chiefly psychological, and chiefly concerned with examining the claims of determinism, whereas Hodgson's central thesis was theological and his scope extensive where Farrer's is intensive. The whole book is in the shape of a debate between the Determinist (a composite, slippery figure) and the Libertarian. In a scholarly work it is novel to find only three bibliographical footnotes and less than a dozen of any sort. The work is original enough not to need notes, though it could have done with an index. The style is clear, witty, and sparkling with illustrations.

The determinist thesis is often expressed, nowhere more clearly than this: "At the moment of choice . . . the factors then in play *determine* the result" (italics mine). One would expect the author, a champion of Libertarianism, to show (a) that the determinist thesis must admit exceptions, or even one exception, for even one would ruin it; and (b) that the libertarian thesis is at least somewhere true. This he does (in the main successfully, in this reviewer's opinion), by meeting the determinist in one area after another where the determinist finds no reason to believe that free will exists, and showing not only that the determinist case is not made, but that the libertarian case is stronger. If it is complained that the author never faces the real problem, the metaphysical one, and hardly even mentions it till near the end, the author knows this; but he stays within the bounds of natural theology, or psychology—the "material" branch of the preliminary stage of rational theology. (Those who suppose that Christians have nothing to learn from natural theology, and no need of it, might be helped by this book.)

Five chapters, a third of the book, are devoted to the question of the relative rank and function of body and of mind in voluntary action. (All voluntary acts are acts of decision, the author thinks.) The "cash value" of determinism is found to be that we are in no action free from physical determination of some kind. Against this it is maintained (successfully, this reviewer thinks) that "the cortical mechanism allows of being governed by a response to *meaning*." Determinism is shown to be self-refuting. Once our mind perceives that the formula of determinism's creed "determines and enslaves the very act which acknowledges and reckons with our enslavement, our determinism becomes a practical absurdity . . . it simply belies the power and the nature of action."

From this point on, different forms of the determinist attack on libertarianism are examined, with fairness and humor, in illuminating detail. The various arguments from the predictability of conduct, from the analogy of physical nature (in the midst

of which freedom would be the "solitary surd"), from activation by the strongest motive, from empirical psychology (which professes to certainties it cannot vindicate), along with certain proposed compromises between determinism and indeterminism, are examined and found to be fallacious.

There are particularly interesting chapters on Responsibility and Freedom, and on Valuation and Invention. One may not agree that the concept of moral responsibility is derived from that of legal responsibility (were there not human beings before there were courts?), nor that the basic idea of legal responsibility is punishment; still this gives a manageable approach, and the author does admit that "conscience in her most developed, most sensitive activity, leaves law clean behind." The chapter on Valuation and Invention, starting out from Moore's *Principia*, discusses aspiration and ideals, along with one of the author's favorite topics, the inventive imagination.

A final chapter on Liberty and Theology confesses the paradox involved in the Christian faith that each man is a locus both of human and divine will; a striking admission from one who all along viewed paradox as a sign of philosophic incompetence or guilt. It is pointed out, however, that this paradox is far wider than human choices, running throughout the universe. But that is not the concern of his book. What the author set out to do has been well done: to clear away obstacles "from the serious contemplation of any will whatsoever . . . and even . . . cast some positive light on that human will from which alone the divine can be conjectured."

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**The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology.** Edited by MIRCEA ELIADE and JOSEPH M. KITAGAWA. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959. xi-164 pp. \$5.00.

The formal study of "other" religions seems to be coming into vogue again after a decline of status beginning in the 1930's. Because there have been so few centers of graduate study and research in this field in America, our colleges, universities, and seminaries in too many instances do not now have adequately trained instructors for even the introductory courses in the history of religions.

The University of Chicago is almost literally the only major university which has maintained through the last three decades a respectable program of graduate professional training in the study of religions. The present volume, edited by two distinguished University of Chicago scholars, is a memorial to the late Joachim Wach who served as head of the department of history of religions at their university for a number of years. It is an appropriate memorial to Wach for it is admirably suited to serve an end so important in his latter years, namely, to bring up to date laymen, preachers, teachers, and theologians who missed out on a quarter of a century of developments in research into the understanding of "other" religions.

Professor Kitagawa's chapter, "The History of Religions in America," is a notable contribution to the intellectual history of our country. However, this chapter does not serve to introduce us to Dr. Kitagawa's real genius as an interpreter of Mahayana Buddhism. Himself a Japanese by birth, professionally trained at the University of Chicago under Wach, Dr. Kitagawa bridges the gap of Eastern and Western ways of understanding.

For either the beginning student or the most erudite scholar in the field, Wilfred

Cantwell Smith's essay, "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?" will be both delightful and enlightening. Professor Smith, of McGill University, stubbornly resists all efforts to manufacture a new label for what previous generations of students called "comparative religions." His survey of "three stages" in the modern study of mankind's religions is accurate and easy to follow. The direction he proposes for the further study of religions calls for earnest and thorough consideration by philosophers and theologians as well as historians of religions. As a theologian of the history of religions I must ask for a fuller account of the reasoning which leads Professor Smith to the conclusion that "dialogue" with a person of another faith (and he considers such "dialogue" to be the most trustworthy means of getting to know another's religion) ought to enable the Christian "at last to apprehend his own faith fully and loyally (and perhaps more truly?) and simultaneously to appreciate the quality and even the ultimate validity (in the eyes of God) of others'" (p. 49).

The two essays on phenomenology are "tough" reading, but that by Père Jean Daniélou is particularly rewarding. Raffaele Pettazzoni, in his discussion of the phenomenological structure and historical development of the notion of the Supreme Being, maintains the not unfamiliar thesis that the notion of the Supreme Being derives from man's existential needs. His documentation is more original and informative than his thesis. Père Daniélou writes a brilliant critical analysis of Henry Duméry's attempt to introduce a "normative element" into the study of the immense amount of materials now available concerning the myths, symbols, and rites of mankind.

Professor Eliade's essay follows upon Daniélou's very nicely, taking up the problem of method in studying symbols as they are structured and used in the several religions. In the course of his discussion, Eliade gives a clear and profound distinction of the *métier* of the historian of religions from that of the philosopher of religion and that of the theologian of the history of religions. Eliade can always be depended upon to treat his subject matter with balance and sympathetic understanding, but here he excels himself, with the result that the reader does not line up competitively behind one of the disciplines against the other but comes to have great appreciation of the importance of each for the others. There is a wealth of wisdom and insight here which could help those theological faculties now trying to find a place in the theological curriculum for the study of non-Christian religions.

But there is another incidental contribution in Eliade's discussion of religious symbols and this perhaps has a more widespread appeal than that suggested in the preceding paragraph. Many Americans, including great numbers "outside" the Church as well as those "inside," have become at least penultimately concerned to understand what Paul Tillich is saying to modern man about Christian symbols. Eliade's chapter provides a perspective from which Tillich's discussion of symbols can be viewed and perhaps understood.

Friedrich Heiler contributes the concluding essay. Heiler is a great and good old man, but the value of his essay is more historical and literary than adapted to the end which he intended. It is a beautiful statement of the sentiment that the history of religions can be the messiah bringing in the day of fraternity among all religions. Heiler, for all his true greatness, has never learned that his love for men of other religions is no criterion for estimating the truth of their faith affirmations.

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**A History of Israel.** By JOHN BRIGHT. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. 500 pp. (16 maps). \$7.50.

The last half-century has seen a revolution in our knowledge of the history of Israel. While a vigorous program of archeological research has been exposing more and more the life and culture of Israel and her neighbors, equally intensive investigation of the literary remains of the ancient Near East has been enlarging our knowledge of the religious and secular thought of the area. Dramatic instances of the new wealth of material now at the disposal of the historian are the notable discoveries of the Mari, Nuzi, and Ugaritic texts, and the publication of an important addition to the Babylonian chronicles from the period of the fall of Jerusalem. Much of this invaluable data was scattered through the periodical and monograph literature, and for a comprehensive view of the history of Israel English readers had to depend on the excellent, but somewhat dated, two-volume work of W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson and a recent translation of Martin Noth's *The History of Israel*. A competent and thorough synthesis of the new material into the framework of Old Testament history as already known was sorely needed.

Dr. John Bright, Professor of Hebrew and the Interpretation of the Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, has produced exactly the synthesis of new discoveries with former knowledge which was required. His book, in spite of the author's fine, flowing style, is not light reading, for scientific exactness is never compromised in the interest of a popular presentation. The work was obviously designed for serious study and for reference, and includes all the apparatus needed for this purpose. The footnoting is extensive, and directs the reader to the original sources and basic studies on which the author's conclusions depend. Biblical passages bearing on the matter in hand are bracketed into the text, and gathered together in an index of scriptural references. The book is provided with a bibliography, a selection of maps from *The Westminster Historical Atlas*, a set of chronological charts, an index of subjects, and map references.

Dr. Bright does not interpret his title in a narrow sense. The prologue of the book touches briefly on the prehistoric period in Palestine, and Part One deals at length with the age of the Patriarchs, which strictly speaking predates the founding of Israel as a nation. The end point is rather arbitrarily set at the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt. Within this historical framework the author has constant reference to those international events which conditioned the internal affairs of Israel. In contrast with Martin Noth's history, Dr. Bright's work is written under the conviction that the religious faith of a nation is an important fact of its history. This is all the more true of Israel, since she regarded her own peculiar history as the arena of the revelation of God. Sections such as "The Theological Problem of the Monarchy," "The Prophetic Reinterpretation of Israel's Faith," and "The Religion of the Law" are especially valuable because they put the theological developments intelligibly within the framework of history.

The author's own conviction that the story of Israel's historical struggles remains unfulfilled apart from Christ, toward whom the whole process tends and in whom it may be seen as "salvation history," comes to clearest expression in the Epilogue, where unfortunately it has to be treated with unseemly brevity.

Dr. Bright's general viewpoint, and his treatment of most specific problems (for example, the question of the relationship of Ezra and Nehemiah), follow the lines laid down by his teacher, W. F. Albright. Great weight is given to archeological data and

to the results of linguistic study, and the Old Testament is treated with respect as a reliable historical source in its own right. The results of this sound methodology are most plainly apparent in the treatment of the Exodus and the Conquest. This section is the clearest and most cogent summary treatment of the period that the reviewer has yet seen. The account of the circumstances attending the fall of Jerusalem is a model of lucidity and accuracy in the handling of exceedingly complicated data.

All serious students of the Old Testament will welcome the publication of this volume. The nature of the biblical data is such that its religious message becomes clear only to those who are willing to put themselves under the discipline of historical study. In an amazingly brief space for a subject so vast, Dr. Bright has provided a clear, comprehensive, scholarly, and thoroughly up-to-date treatment of the history of Israel, which will remain a standard work in the field for a long time to come.

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**Paul and the Salvation of Mankind.** By JOHANNES MUNCK. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959. 351 pp. \$6.50.

This is a significant book. The author, who is Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aarhus (Denmark), argues that the Tübingen School has left a legacy which has been detrimental to New Testament scholarship ever since. This legacy is the mistaken notion that early Christian history can be understood as essentially a dialectic between the earliest Jewish church of Jerusalem and the universal, Hellenistic Christianity of Paul.

In the development of this thesis, Munck begins with a discussion of the conversion and call of the apostle. He insists that the Damascus Road experience was quite without psychological or historical preparation. He is correct, of course, in noting that persistent efforts to "psychologize" the event scarcely do justice to the thought of Paul, but the fact that the persecutor had witnessed the message of his victims and the stoning of Stephen should not be ignored as a preparatory factor in his conversion.

Munck also adopts the view of Cullmann that Paul in carrying out his mission viewed himself as the one who restrains the man of lawlessness (II Thess. 2:6) and is thus responsible for the delay of the *parousia*. Thus Paul's apostleship is more important than that of any of the other early Christian leaders, since he plays a decisive role in the events which lead to the *eschaton*. It is through his mission to the Gentiles that God's eschatological purposes for the saving of the Jews and the world are to be achieved (Rom. 11). Quite apart from the possibility that II Thessalonians may not be an authentic Pauline writing, this conclusion rests on debatable exegesis.

Munck proceeds to describe the views of Baur and his followers, and then refute them through thorough exegesis of relevant passages from Paul's four major epistles. The author notes, of course, that the dating of early Christian literature by the Tübingen School has been abandoned, but he insists that the interpretation of history which it presupposed has been maintained by scholars like Lietzmann and Goguel. Study of the Pauline writings, however, indicates to Munck that in essential doctrinal views and even in the concept of the mission of the church Paul was in general agreement with the Jerusalem leaders. The only real difference between the apostle and the Jerusalem community was in missionary strategy.

Moreover, the Judaizers, who were universally identified as the opponents of

Paul in the Tübingen stereotype, actually played a minor role in the early Christian drama. In fact, they played no part whatsoever in the events of the Jerusalem community, since their origin was not Palestinian. "To sum up, we may say that the Judaizing movement does not, as the Tübingen School thought, represent the original Christian conception of the Church in the period from Jesus to Paul, but that it is a Gentile Christian heresy that was possible only in the Pauline churches" (p. 134). Munck is no doubt right in his contention that the easy identification of all of Paul's opponents as either Judaizers or Gnostics is without adequate support, yet his own identification of the Judaizers as Gentiles is hardly warranted.

Support for the author's thesis is found throughout *Acts* and the *Synoptics*, and finally, a discussion of Paul's relationship to Jerusalem and Rome is presented. In this section, Munck argues convincingly that the early Jewish church in Jerusalem displayed marked differences from Judaism; it was not, as the followers of Baur have supposed, merely another sect of the Jews. Rather it was the kind of church with which Paul enjoyed considerable agreement, and evidence of this is seen in the eagerness with which he collected his offering for the Jerusalem saints. Munck seems to ignore, however, the apostle's genuine apprehension that the collection might not be acceptable to the saints (Rom. 15:31). Paul's fears appear to indicate that real differences did exist between the early Jewish church and the apostle to the Gentiles.

Nevertheless, Munck has made an excellent case for his main thesis: the erroneous reconstruction of early Christian history by the Tübingen School with its artificial dialectic ought to be abandoned. Surely the beginnings of the church were more varied and complex than either Baur or Munck suppose. The latter's case, however, is presented with clarity and tightly reasoned argument; it is supported by thorough research and extensive documentation. Every serious student of the New Testament should study this book with care.

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**Gnosticism and Early Christianity.** By ROBERT M. GRANT. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. viii-227 pp. \$4.50.

**The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics.** By JEAN DORESSE. New York: The Viking Press, 1960. xvii-445 pp. \$6.50.

**The Gospel According to Thomas.** By A. GUILLAUMONT, HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, GILLES QUISPTEL, WALTER TILL, and YASSAH 'ABD AL MASI. Leiden: E. J. Brill; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. vii-62 pp. \$2.00.

**The Secret Sayings of Jesus.** By ROBERT M. GRANT with DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960. 206 pp. \$3.50.

**The Gospel of Truth.** By KENDRICK GROBEL. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 206 pp. \$4.00.

Gnosticism, in its manifold forms, was of acute concern to the early Church heresiologists since it presented a rival interpretation of Christianity. Modern scholars, though less motivated by apologetic interests, have continued to be fascinated by its vitality and variety as well as by the unsolved problems of its origin and its relation to Judaism and Christianity. Certain of its basic emphases parallel tendencies in contemporary thought. Thus for the Gnostic salvation was found through self-knowledge.

Many psychiatrists and some theologians speak the same language today. Bultmann, in his famous essay, "The New Testament and Mythology," distinguished his position with great care from that of Heidegger or Kamlah lest he be accused of proclaiming salvation by self-knowledge. Yet some critics continue to bring such a charge against him.

Again: the prophetic tradition looked for the triumph of God within this world; apocalypticism awaited his visible triumph on earth after the arrival of a totally new age; Gnosticism abandoned the material, historical realm to the forces of evil and sought God's triumph solely in the heavenly or spiritual realm. Proponents of the New Theology insist, with the prophets, that history is the place to respond responsibly to God's will; but they cannot believe that the Kingdom will come in history as it is, nor can they share the apocalypticist's expectation of a new age here in the visible world. This pushes them uncomfortably close to a Gnostic view of history despite their insistence on "Hebraic" or "Biblical" categories.

While the general emphases of Gnosticism have long been known, our detailed knowledge has come chiefly from the partisan writings of the heresiologists such as Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius. A few original documents were known, but now this limited evidence has been enormously increased by the discovery near ancient Chenoboskion in Upper Egypt of a Coptic Gnostic Library copied around A.D. 300-400. The thirteen codices contain some 48(49) treatises with over 700 pages, representing 44 different works, most of which were previously unknown. The discovery was made about 1945, but various complications prevented the rapid publication of the materials. The five books listed above deal with Gnosticism in general or with the Chenoboskion materials in particular.

R. M. Grant's *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* was written before the Chenoboskion excitement reached its present peak and it contains only limited references to these documents. This volume increases Professor Grant's growing stature as a leading interpreter of the early Christian period. His study is primarily an introduction to Gnosticism and its relation to Judaism and Christianity. The novel feature of the presentation is his consistent arrangement of the materials so as to support his hypothesis that Gnosticism arose "out of the debris of apocalyptic-eschatological hopes which resulted from the fall or falls of Jerusalem" (p. viii). Not all will accept his proposed pattern, since the pieces of the puzzle are so numerous and so flexible that they may be arranged in various patterns with almost equal success. Yet Grant's volume is a notable and plausible effort to clarify the picture.

The long-delayed translation of Doresse's study, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, centers in the newly discovered writings, but the first hundred pages serve also as a general introduction to Gnosticism. Doresse is one of the few scholars who has had access to all the Chenoboskion materials, and his work is unique in that it deals with them all—at least in survey fashion. In addition he has used his apparently encyclopedic knowledge of related literature to point out similarities and possible connections. With its extensive index this is unquestionably the best introduction to the Chenoboskion Library. The translation is readable, despite the occasional use of terms such as "Essenians" or "Gomorrah." (The date assigned to Alexander Severus on p. 92 is obviously a typographical slip.) Appendix II is a complete translation of *The Gospel According to Thomas* plus preliminary comments and a few very useful notes.

Brill's and Harper's *The Gospel According to Thomas* had the distinction of

being the first English translation published. This is the *Chenoboskion* document which is of most interest to the general public since it is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, some closely related to our Gospels, others sounding like variants, and still others being thoroughly Gnostic. In addition to being first in the field the Brill-Harper edition was prepared by a team of international scholars, is accompanied by a transcript of the Coptic text, and the translation includes the Greek words which appear along with the Coptic. The volume also contains an abbreviated introduction, an occasional translators' note, and a listing of "Scriptural Parallels and Echoes." The commentary has been delayed until a subsequent book. A minor criticism concerns the use of capitals. It is defensible that they should be used for pronouns referring to Jesus or God, but (a) the plan has not been carried out consistently, e.g., No. 101 below, and (b) in some contexts this use of capitals too easily removes the ambiguity of a passage, e.g., the use of "Man" in No. 8 ("The Man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea.")

It is interesting to compare this translation with that by Doresse and with that of William R. Schoedel which appears in *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* by Grant and Freedman. Most of the variations are stylistic and do not reflect differences in the reading or understanding of the Coptic (or Greek). However, a score or more phrases differ in substance and occasionally this is enough to change the entire meaning of a saying. A single illustration is given below. (Unfortunately the three translations have used three different systems for numbering the sayings; that of Brill-Harper is used here.)

#### Saying No. 101

Brill-Harper: "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in My way will not be able to be a (disciple) to me. And whoever does (not) love( his father) and his mother in My way will not be able to be a (disciple) to me, for My mother . . . but (My) true (Mother) gave me life." (Schoedel gives substantially the same translation.)

Doresse: "He who has not, like me, detested his father and his mother cannot be my disciple; and he who has loved h(is father a)nd his mother as much as he loves me cannot be my disciple. My mother, indeed, has . . . because in truth she gave me life."

Lacking any knowledge of Coptic I cannot comment on these differences, but suspect they will provide the exegetes with material for controversy.

In addition to its *Thomas* translation, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* has admirable introductory chapters plus a saying-by-saying commentary. While the latter is more detailed than the brief notes in Doresse's book, it is still only a preliminary commentary and inevitably leaves many questions unanswered. This does not lessen its value as the most useful study currently available in English. Grant argues for the dependence of this Gnostic Gospel on the canonical Gospels. While this view has been sharply challenged in several quarters, it has the enthusiastic and stubborn support of the present reviewer.

*The Gospel of Truth*, by Kendrick Grobel, is a translation and fairly detailed commentary on the Coptic Gnostic "meditation" which may have originated with Valentinus himself. In 1956 *Evangelium Veritatis*, a sumptuous edition of this work, appeared along with French, German, and English translations. However, Grobel's work has at least these four advantages. The previous edition was as expensive as it was "sumptuous"; it is notorious that the English translation in *Evangelium Veritatis*

was the least adequate of the three; Grobel has included the four pages missing from the previous translation; the new work contains an excellent commentary. The few who know Coptic will still need the 1956 edition, although Grobel has discussed the Coptic terms when this has seemed relevant.

In the coming decade the Chenoboskion Library may well replace the Dead Sea Scrolls in the academic limelight. Those who have read these five books will be prepared to participate in the discussion and will await eagerly the publication of the remaining documents from that remarkable collection.

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**The Word Incarnate.** By W. NORMAN PITTINGER. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. xxiii-295 pp. \$7.50.

The new vigor in the *Library of Constructive Theology* is one of the welcome manifestations of a widely felt mood of renascent constructiveness. In 1958 A. C. Bouquet's *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* was added to what H. P. Van Dusen has called "the most distinguished shelf of theological writings in English published in the last half century." Now comes the first American contribution to this series which seeks to "think out anew, in the light of modern knowledge, the foundation affirmations of our common Christianity" and to do so with "religious experience as the starting point." Professor of apologetics at General Theological Seminary, Dr. Pittenger's publications and activities over two decades have centered in a deep concern to engage the contemporary mind with the Christian revelation ecumenically conceived. As the fruit of long reflection, solid erudition, and comprehensive acquaintance with current discussion, the book is indeed a notable achievement.

There are far more points of illumination and stimulus than can be noted in a brief review. The prescription of the "light of modern knowledge" is taken very seriously in a genuinely creative attempt to convene the insights of panentheism, emergent evolution, existentialism, and Collingwoodian historical understanding. Less effectively filled is the parallel prescription of "religious experience as a starting point." For while much that is judicious is said *about* the Christological datum, the datum itself is hardly portrayed with sufficient concreteness. Nevertheless it is crucial to establish the importance not only of the biblical history but of the continuously present Lord and the faithful response to him; and this is done along with a lucid treatment of subjectivity and objectivity. Toward the end there is an excellent statement on Christ and the church, preceded by a consideration of the Trinity. Curiously, though Christ is supposed to be known through his benefits, on the traditional problems of the Atonement there is nothing.

The heart of the book is the interpretation of the Incarnation in terms of Logos: God's supreme, decisive self-expression given for man in Christ. Noteworthy emphasis falls upon the radical humanity which mediates the Word and upon the continuity of Christ with creation and general revelation which he fulfills as well as redeems. Here the articulation is eloquent. The question will be whether the divinity *really* comes into incarnate union or whether, for Pittenger, it remains hovering bifurcatedly behind and above the humanity. In addition to the incisive (toward Brunner somewhat acid) criticism of classical and modern Christologies, a special merit of the book is the copious affirmative reference to the "catholic modernist" side of modern

liberalism. One regrets that there is not the same kind of acquaintance with the side which stems from Schleiermacher, whose Christology essentially resembles Dr. Pittenger's—except that Schleiermacher more definitely incarnated the Word. However that may be, we can celebrate a major new Christological treatise which will edify many in our time.

A. DURWOOD FOSTER

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**Catholic Life, U.S.A.: Contemporary Lay Movements.** By LEO R. WARD, C.S.C. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1959. 263 pp. \$3.95.

Whether or not a sustained Catholic-Protestant dialogue can be developed in America, Protestants can certainly learn a lot about meaningful lay activity from their Catholic neighbors. In this volume Father Ward describes from firsthand contact more than a dozen creative movements or programs involving Catholic laymen. Most of them are American in origin and have emerged within the last three decades, in which period Father Ward sees Catholics developing a new confidence and a new interest in humanity at large.

The current Lay Renaissance finds Catholics and Protestants making parallel discoveries through parallel experiments in facing the same problems. For example, this book tells of the trend toward interpreting the distinctive role of laymen in the church as concerned with secular and temporal matters. It describes the growth of study and action clubs, of "little parishes" within the parish, and of experiments in active lay participation in the liturgy. Lacking, from the Protestant perspective, is any description of regional conferences for vocational groups, comparable to the German Evangelical Academies.

Serious reconsideration of the meaning of the lay apostolate is a common Christian phenomenon in the twentieth century. In Europe the Catholic Yves Congar writes a penetrating theology of the laity (*Lay People in the Church*) and Hendrik Kraemer starts the same process among Protestants (*A Theology of the Laity*). French Catholics seek to penetrate the proletariat with worker-priests, and English Protestants penetrate factories in the Sheffield Industrial Mission. Abbé Michonneau brings revolutionary patterns to a Paris parish, and Anglican Southcott works out the pattern of house churches in Leeds. Catholic Action is to a degree paralleled by the Life and Work movement and the emphatic leadership of the Laity Department of the World Council. But the organizational genius and massive unity of the Roman Church mean that such experiments as find the blessing of the hierarchy spread more rapidly in that communion.

Certainly American Catholics are far ahead of Protestants in appropriating this ferment for the organized life of the laity. Evidence of this fact is given not only by the materials of this volume, but also by the fact that such a book has been written. One must search evanescent literature from many sources to keep abreast of comparable developments in Protestant America.

The author frankly accentuates the positive. Thus he does not deal critically with what he describes, beyond, for example, expressing his conviction that the Cana Movement for engaged or married couples is too much controlled by priests. In a folksy, reportorial style, which makes the book easy to peruse, Father Ward sets forth detailed programs and personal interviews and statements of aims for the various

movements. The result lacks profundity but provides a good over-all picture of the newer facets of modern American Catholic lay life. Older features such as sodalities and retreats do not receive discussion. Chapters deal with "Living the Liturgy," the Christian Family Movement, the Cana Movement, study clubs for college graduates, the Sisters Formation Movement, the Grail Movement, national councils of men's and women's work, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, interracial communities, the Catholic Worker Movement, the Catholic Rural Life Conference, and certain progressive parishes.

Protestants—laity and clergy—would be well advised to read this book not only to learn about their neighbors but also to take a cue for Protestant lay activity from some of these fresh patterns.

FREDERICK K. WENTZ

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**The Liturgical Renewal in the Church.** Edited by MASSEY HAMILTON SHEPHERD, JR. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. xii-460 pp. \$3.25.

**Christian Community.** By J. V. LANGMEAD CASSERLEY. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1960. x-174 pp. \$5.50.

These two books, while slightly related in subject matter, are entirely different in their approach. The first is composed of six addresses delivered at a Liturgical Conference held in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1958, under the auspices of the Associated Parishes, a group within the Protestant Episcopal Church which seeks to foster interest in the liturgical revival. The second book is a scholarly study of the church as a necessary community "without which," according to the publisher's statement, "a man could not attain the full spirituality of which he is capable."

1. Of the two, the first will have the greatest appeal to the minister who desires to learn something about the liturgical movement in non-Roman churches. Those who wish to know the theological basis for the movement will turn to the first address by Theodore O. Wedel, Warden of Washington Cathedral. Here they will find not only theology in simplified form but the story of the author's experience in liturgical studies, in which he describes his debt to a Roman Catholic scholar, Dom Odo Casel, for his new interpretation of the Mass as an *anamnesis*. This new emphasis made it possible for theologians to consider the Eucharistic "real presence miracle" as "first of all a time miracle, not a space miracle." It would be impossible in the space available to follow Wedel's argument here; the reader will be interested in his conclusions, which to the reviewer seem logical and deeply spiritual.

But the second chapter is the one which will bring light to those who know little concerning the liturgical revival. Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, traces the history of the movement and explodes several widely held misconceptions about its meaning and objectives. The liturgical renewal has, as he says, "no central organization responsible for its promotion." It includes Anglican, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant. Its followers cross lines with great facility and, in the process, give proof that there is a oneness in true worship which transcends man-made barriers. Roman Catholic scholars join with non-Roman in scholarly research, as this reviewer knows by experience.

A chapter on the Protestant Worship Revival by Arthur Carl Piepkorn of Con-

cordia Seminary covers Protestantism in general and the Lutheran denominations in particular. He gives attention to a little-known Methodist organization, The Order of St. Luke, which seems to foster interest in the liturgical movement within the framework of The Methodist Church.

Particularly valuable to the understanding of the liturgical renewal is the address by the Rt. Rev. Arthur Carl Lichtenberger, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, who points out that liturgical interest is not centered upon "ritual and regalia," but upon worship, and that worship should be in the fullest sense the action of the people. He contrasts the new liturgical movement with the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century, which strengthened the wall of partition between the clergy and the laity by placing such great emphasis upon the priesthood and making worship so complicated.

Here is the point which is usually misunderstood by those who have had no real contact with the movement. Recent magazine articles have criticized the increased "ritualism" in the churches and linked together "ritualists" and those who seek greater liturgical participation. For instance, every minister in The Methodist Church who wears a clerical collar and likes a complicated service with many choir responses and a minimum of preaching, is supposed to be a candidate for membership in the Order of St. Luke, while, as a matter of fact, such things are of little interest to that brotherhood.

Equally interesting and important are the chapter, "The Pastoral Implications of the Liturgical Renewal," by John Oliver Patterson, headmaster of Kent School, and the sermon, "A Word for Ascensiontide," by William Hamilton Nes, professor of homiletics, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

2. The book by Dr. Casserley is primarily a study of the Church in relation to one of its branches, the Anglican Community, which the author believes holds a true balance between "catholic" and "evangelical" emphases. Dr. Casserley discusses the problems which arise out of the various theories of the Church and its ministry. Writing from the Anglican viewpoint, he is nevertheless very fair in putting the case as he sees it. For instance, in his chapter, "The Structure of the Church Militant," he makes out a good case for the historic episcopate, yet takes care to explain that by saying this theory or doctrine is essentially true, he does not mean that we must deprive the organizations which have no such historic episcopacy of their standing. "Church life is not invalidated by the loss of episcopacy," he says, but contends that this does have value which in time may be recognized by nonepiscopal churches.

This scholarly volume is a masterful analysis of the present-day problems of the ecumenical church, although written especially for Anglicans. Hence it will be valuable to all who are interested in the possibility of church union, for the Anglican position must be reckoned with in any such scheme. The Anglicans are always in the forefront of any discussion of such union, but other denominations sometimes feel that their interest is merely academic and not practical. A study of this book will make it clear what the Catholic wing of Anglicanism believes regarding the church and its ministry.

And, to a Methodist, it would seem that the author has made out a very good case and provided a platform from which we all might, with some degree of hope, leap out into ecumenical space.

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**The Phenomenon of Man.** By PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. 318 pp. \$5.00.

In this book an eminent anthropologist who was also a Jesuit priest has bequeathed to mankind a vision, cosmic in scope, of the place of man in the universe. Starting with the origin and early history of the cosmos as a background, he early focuses attention on our own planet, and the history of the slowly unfolding drama of its evolution. A key idea basic to his treatment of this theme is the necessity to view the whole evolutionary process not only from "without" as in rigorously objective science, but from "within" the process itself as well. As in the history of nations and peoples, so with the larger history of the whole earth, the view from without can see only chance and accident, not meaning or purpose. Only when the evolutionary history of the earth is viewed from within can its driving power, coherence, and aim be discerned.

Fr. Teilhard distinguishes three major phases of the whole evolutionary process, marked by two major discontinuities. First is the stage of the evolution of large organic molecules, during which the growing oceans of the developing earth became filled with the constituents out of which living organisms could ultimately emerge. The first discontinuity occurred when these molecules first aggregated themselves into living systems; organisms which are born, grow, reproduce, and die. Once they had emerged out of the molecular sea, such organisms in the vigor and vitality of their growth consumed all the organic material and covered the whole earth with a layer of living matter. So the earth acquired a biosphere in addition to its barysphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere. The next great discontinuity was the appearance of man, with whose advent reflective, self-conscious thought emerged out of the biosphere. Not until just recently has it been possible even for man himself to get any hint of the revolutionary significance of this development. Now the biosphere has been crowned with a noosphere. The whole surface of the planet has been covered with a phosphorescent film of thought.

As Teilhard de Chardin sees it, this is the great crowning work of evolution; the end toward which everything, from the vantage point of the "within" of the process, had been leading from the beginning. "This sudden deluge of cerebralisation, this biological invasion of a new animal type which gradually eliminates or subjects all forms of life that are not human, this irresistible tide of fields and factories, this immense and growing edifice of matter and ideas . . . seem to proclaim that there has been a change on the earth and a change of planetary proportions. . . . Everything precious, active, and progressive originally contained in that cosmic fragment from which our world emerged, is now concentrated in and crowned by the noosphere." (p. 183.)

This book is a fascinating and powerful presentation of the amazing fact of the emergence of man in the unfolding drama of the cosmos. The book is scientifically adequate throughout, but every sentence transcends the bare framework of scientific exposition so as to bring out meanings generally overlooked. This is accomplished through a uniquely evocative and fascinating style which captivates the reader in the contagion of the author's delight and enthusiasm with his material. His concept of the noosphere as a phenomenon distinct from but of equal importance with the biosphere is particularly fruitful and rewarding. This book combines good science with good theology. Its major achievement lies in its fabrication of a whole new vantage point from which to view that amazing phenomenon of the cosmos which is man himself.

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**Marriage: East and West.** By DAVID and VERA MACE. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960. 359 pp. \$4.50.

*Marriage: East and West* is a rather remarkable undertaking. For it attempts as "an impressionistic picture painted on a very broad canvas" to portray the marriage and family values and customs of major portions of the Orient, particularly those of the great ancient civilizations sweeping from the Indian subcontinent east and north to Japan. One may object, of course, that this is not all of the East, but by any fair standard the countries included count as a sufficiently large and significant assignment for any two courageous observers to attempt to describe.

The book must be accepted on its own terms. It is not, by the explicit admission of its authors, a "work of scholarship." Its intent, in the absence of others like it, is a kind of preliminary reconnaissance of the landscape, drawing attention to the major landmarks and perhaps in particular to the kinds of scenery strikingly different from what one may observe at home.

On their own terms David and Vera Mace have succeeded. They have written an interesting book, one that remains constantly aware of how East and West differ from one another and one that should provide the interested American reader with an understanding of why their ways are "not our ways"; it may, in fact, help us realize why at this juncture in history our differing customs may generate more misunderstanding and hostility than we, in our innocence, have been led to anticipate. In its own way the book is, therefore, an antidote against ethnocentrism, an antidote very deliberately administered at a time when it is seriously needed.

Running through the various chapters as a continuing theme is the contrast of East and West. I suspect at times that, relying on the kinds of evidence available to them (including fiction), the Maces have tended to contrast an overidealized Eastern picture with a rather romantically distorted picture of our marriage customs. (American marriage is less romantic in its actualities than in its talk, including its literary and cinematic talk.) But the contrast also has a note of defeat in it; for at various intervals we are reminded that the values and customs of the East are rapidly eroding under the unrelenting pressures of the winds of technological and political change that are blowing even more sharply in some Eastern lands than among us. The stability of the inherited customs has been undermined; the old pillars may crash, and coming generations may need to work out their ways and values under other conditions.

In describing the traditional patterns of the past, the Maces have anchored them functionally in the ancient economic arrangements of these civilizations. Here, of course, the breakdown is also occurring, and here the question of what foundations may be laid for the new order of things remains as a major burden not only for the family but for the social order as a whole. In all of this, however, greater attention might well have been given to the degree to which both the ancient economic arrangements and the domestic arrangements were based on systems of inequality and exploitation. The reduction of women to the playthings and servants of their masculine overlords is a nasty picture, no matter how much the spinners of romantic tales may have hidden these facts behind their pretty phrases. No one need shed a tear over the destruction of these customs, nor of the economic arrangements to which they were linked.

One needs to ask, however, to what degree the philosophy and religion of the East served to justify misery, injustice, disease, and drudgery. Whether the attack

on these evils is launched in the name of a secular humanism or in the name of the Christian gospel, I would contend that it is not ethnocentrism to label the brutal exploitation of one sex by another injustice, nor is it simply a Western prejudice to suggest that human dignity, freedom, and equality are values by which one may judge filth and degradation, East and West.

Two final observations. The degree to which both in the Eastern mind and sometimes by implication in the writing of the Maces the romantic individualism of some American marriages is identified as the major pattern of our society and presumably a product of American Christianity tends, I believe, to confuse the issue. True, the American churches have sprinkled holy water on much that is unholy. But a more discriminating picture of American marriage would be a matter of justice toward us in the same measure that we are asked to make a just appraisal of Eastern patterns. We are not necessarily offering the East our worst.

The whole social order of the Eastern world is in the midst of change. Most of the change will arise from the impact of forces which are not Christian in origin or nature; yet they arise from the Christian West. In this situation the strategy of help and of resistance which we must support will need a high degree of understanding of the East, of sophistication in application, and of patience in execution. The Maces have broken the trail; others must follow and very quickly.

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**Religious Education: A Comprehensive Survey.** Edited by MARVIN J. TAYLOR. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 446 pp. \$6.50.

Abingdon Press has added another important book to its growing series of new studies in religious education. This work, edited by Marvin J. Taylor, in the tradition of the earlier Lotz volume, *Orientation in Religious Education* (1950), is encyclopedic. Thirty-seven articles, primarily descriptive and analytic in character, cover as many main topics related to religious education. This is a large book (each article is seven to eight thousand words in length) designed for a wide and varied use. Laymen, seminarians, professional religious educators will use it as a reference, as an introduction to topics of special interest, as a guide to further reading. It stands too as a kind of systematic summary of the present state of American religious education with all its problems and its opportunities. Both general and church-school libraries will find it a worthwhile accession.

Taylor has organized the articles according to four main headings: "Principles" (eight articles); "Programs, Materials, Methods" (fourteen articles); "Administration" (seven articles); "Agencies and Organizations" (eight articles). There are brief bibliographies at the end of each article and a larger general bibliography at the end of the volume. Within the various sections the reader can find material dealing with the religious education of various age groups, with such agencies as local, National, and World Councils of Churches, with the use of audio-visuals, with camps, conferences, released-time religious education, vacation church schools, and the like. The section on "Principles of Religious Education" contains such articles as "Philosophies of Education and Religious Education," "Psychology of Religion and Religious Education," and "The Use of the Bible in Religious Education."

Who are the authors who have contributed to this encyclopedic volume? The largest group is made up of academic personnel, teachers in colleges and seminaries. The others are executives for various forms of educational work in ecumenical or denominational agencies. Many of them work in the National Council of Churches. There is a wide range of denominational affiliation, though nearly a dozen of the authors are Methodists.

As in most volumes to which there are a large number of contributors, there is an uneven quality in the articles themselves. The general intent displayed across the wide range of subject matter seems to have been in keeping with the encyclopedic character of the work. The articles are largely informative and reportorial. Thus we find much description and summary, some analysis, and some raising of critical questions. Such an approach has very great value; it does, however, blur distinctions with regard to critical differences and the critical issues confronting American thought in the area of religious education. One of the most valuable of the articles in the collection is that titled "Current Theological Developments and Religious Education," by Daniel D. Williams. This contribution clearly goes beyond description and summary to a critical analysis which points out the sharp differentiation within thinking about religious education which follows from the difference of theological orientation. A good deal more of this type of analysis would be welcome in this volume.

Two of the chapters point sharply to a radical question which must be put to the church, the agencies, and the religious educators. These are the chapters on research by Walter H. Clark and on evaluation by Ernest Ligon. In themselves both discussions leave much to be desired, but the striking impression one gets in reading these accounts is that of the dearth of research and the poverty of the processes of evaluation actually used in the area of religious education. A great mass of program and activity has grown up in connection with the educational life of the churches, a tremendous investment of time and money has been poured into these schemes, and yet little more than impressionistic conclusions are available as to their effectiveness. New curriculum follows new curriculum with little effort to assess the results of either the new or the old. The total impression is that religious education is flying blind. To one reader at least the clear implication is that the need for underwriting carefully designed research to test the effectiveness of what is done and to chart new paths for Christian education.

Valuable as this book is, there are some striking omissions. One misses for example contributions from two of the most creative religious educators in America—Ross Snyder and Randolph Crump Miller. One misses also any account of what might be called liberal or left-wing religious education, such as is represented by the work of Sophia Fahs, a truly distinctive approach to religious education and practice. One misses too one of the most exciting developments in American religious education, the rapidly spreading interest in lay theological education, which is rather different from what is ordinarily described as adult education in the local churches. I mean here the kind of educational venture which is represented in the Ecumenical Institute at Evanston and the various programs in lay theological education associated with the seminaries (the Pacific Coast group, Chicago Theological Seminary, Lancaster and Eden Seminaries, etc.).

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**Outside the Camp.** By CHARLES C. WEST. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959. 168 pp. \$3.00.

This vigorously written book has the subtitle, "The Christian and the World," and served as a study guide for the Eighteenth Quadrennial Conference on the Christian World Mission held in Athens, Ohio, in December, 1959. The author's experience as a missionary in China and his present position with the World Council of Churches add authority to his excellent analysis of the meaning for the Christian of the world revolution. Dr. West has his finger on the pulse of the world and offers the reader a helpful understanding of the confusion of tongues in the areas of world politics, economics, and conflicting ideologies.

The five chapters begin with an analysis of the meaning of the revolutionary age in which we live, summarize next the disillusionment regarding man's ability to solve his own problems, discuss the threat of secularism to the church and the answer of the gospel's message of what God has done for man in Jesus Christ, the nature of the true church as the primary community for the Christian, and the meaning of Christian missions for our day. This meaning is that missions is the business of every Christian and begins in one's own back yard.

As the author notes, this approach is a far cry from the call of sixty years ago to win the world for Christ in this generation. His concern is to remove the label of "the white man's religion" from Christianity, to separate it from the imperialism about to disappear in the rising tide of nationalism in Asia and Africa, and to stress the relevance of the gospel for every man. His message is essentially positive and the last chapter offers the reader a description of the possibilities of a Christian vocation "outside the camp" of traditional religion.

In spite of the neo-orthodox cast of his writing, West is essentially optimistic. I find it hard to accept his claim that God is behind the present upheavals in the world—I don't like to blame Hitler and Stalin on my God—and there appears to be a lack of wrestling with the New Testament teachings about the nature of the demonic and of God's final triumph over the kingdoms of this world. But I am most enthusiastic about his treatment of the meaning of the Christian mission.

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**Faith and Community: A Christian Existential Approach.** By CLYDE A. HOLBROOK. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. 159 pp. \$3.00.

**The Fear of God: The Role of Anxiety in Contemporary Thought.** By FRED BERTHOLD, JR. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. 158 pp. \$3.00.

1. The little book, *Faith and Community*, by the chairman of the department of religion at Oberlin College, deserves wide reading. It is well written, clear in its definitions and expositions, persuasive in its appeal to the mind as well as to the heart. It should do much to clarify the meaning of the much abused term, "existential." This term indicates that giving intellectual assent to objective truths or doctrines, even if supplemented with trust, does not do justice to what is involved in becoming a Christian. The entire person in his existence must be transformed by the act of God in Christ. Therefore the author merely makes his own personal confession and invites the reader to personal participation and response.

Part One deals with "Faith and Personal Existence," and discusses "Primal Faith and Radical Faith," "Some Misunderstandings of Faith," "Faith and Christ," "Faith and God, Its Ultimate Object." Part Two is entitled "Christian Faith and the Moral Life," and discusses "Faith and the Ethical Question" and "Faith and Community." Faith is thus the key word as the comprehensive name for the Christian God-relation, which is initiated and consummated by God in Christ. Radical faith is to be distinguished from the "primal" faith in which all men naturally discover themselves caught. It is other than a reasonable hypothesis on which one chooses to act in lieu of certainty. It is being apprehended by God himself in the person of Christ, who is the double revealer of man and God. He is this, however, only to those who are apprehended by him in both judgment and grace. They are the ones who enter into newness of life in a new relation to God and their fellow men. This leads to the distinctive nature of the Christian life which is no longer under the imperative of the law but under the indicative of love: "We love, because God first loved us." Nevertheless the law and the realm of institutions continue to have their place in the Christian life. Particularly inspiring is what the author has to say about the nature of true community in which alone true individuality is fulfilled, and of man's relation to the physical world which is to share in the fulfilled creation.

The author is widely read and cites from many authors. He enters into "creative conversation with Paul, Luther, Calvin, Augustine, Kierkegaard, Whitehead, Jaspers, Buber, Bultmann, Tillich and others." The book is highly recommended for students of theology and all who seek a deeper insight into the Christian faith.

2. Mr. Berthold, professor of religion at Dartmouth College, in *The Fear of God* defends the thesis that anxiety plays a positive role in the Christian life. Anxiety is always "desire aware of a threat to its fulfillment." It is a compound of fear and longing, with longing or love fundamental. It is man's desire for God threatened by his sinfulness. This is a reflection of the image of God in him and demonstrates that he is not totally depraved, although always still in need of grace if he is to reach the end for which he is created.

The author makes use of the writings of St. Teresa, Luther, Freud, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger to develop his thesis. He compares particularly the views of St. Thomas and Karl Barth. In contrast with both he develops his own view, using as an analogy Freud's notion of "end points of development" "which are laid down for the human individual in his very psychological nature," but may become arrested and never are fully attained. Just so, "man's spiritual end is determined by the way in which he has been created." This situation is itself a reflection of grace and is supplemented by the specific grace that comes to man in Jesus Christ.

This book is well written. The author has a wide acquaintance with both philosophy and theology. He is impatient with what he considers the negative mood in modern neo-orthodox theology and writes more in the tradition of Schleiermacher and of the present-day philosophical theologians. He develops an interesting and fruitful thesis, although in the opinion of this reviewer he doesn't quite carry it off. His use of the word "experience" is not clear, inasmuch as all revelation also passes through the medium of personal experience. He does not do justice to the notion of total depravity as held, e.g., by Luther, who, while admitting man's inability to stand before God in the place of justification, also recognized the grace manifested everywhere in creation and allowed a civil righteousness before men. He does not do justice,

either, to Kierkegaard's somewhat different treatment of anxiety as the constant concomitant of man's freedom out of which both creativity and sin arise.

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**Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings.**

By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. xiii-286 pp. \$4.00.

Is the influence of Martin Luther rising or falling, coming or going? If we may judge by the number of books being written around the swirling issues of the Reformation and the sustained interest of theologians of stature, the answer is clear. We have yet much to learn from the legacy of Luther.

What we have in this scholarly book, *Luther the Expositor*, is not another commentary on Luther's works, but a companion volume to his exegetical writings and a key to the understanding of his expository principles and procedures.

Two images of Luther come through to us four hundred years after the fact. The first is shaped and dominated by the polemical aspect of his career. He was a fighter—a man with a hammer, a man standing up, saying, "Here stand I." The dominance of this side of Luther in literature is quite understandable in the light of the fascination that a conflict of any sort holds for people, historians no less than others. Everyone enjoys a fight. The themes of victory and defeat are always exciting. "And when the combatant was a theologian who combined the finesse of Gene Tunney with the violence of Jack Dempsey, as Luther uniquely did, the fight is so interesting that no one cares very much about how the fighter used to spend his more placid and reflective moments. Luther's polemical writings were masterpieces of German and Latin prose. One is sometimes disappointed, often irritated, but seldom bored by Luther's controversial writings. They are probably the most interesting books Luther ever wrote."

However, for those of us who are called to proclaim the gospel, to get the seed which is the Word into the soil which is the world, the other side of Luther may be more relevant to our needs. After all, what he was defending against the theologians of Rome was a particular interpretation of the Scriptures, together with his right to maintain such an interpretation. "My conscience," he said at Worms, "is captive of the Word of God." "Here," asserts Dr. Pelikan, "is the most important single key to Luther's theology, his doctrine of the Word of God." His faithfulness to his materials, the Scriptures, his disdain of theologians who assay to interpret the Scriptures without quoting them, his insistence on the precise meaning of words and the freeing of the church from the bondage of tradition, are traced with clarity and incisiveness through both commentary and controversy. "Although Luther's polemical writings appear to disqualify him as a systematic theologian, his exegesis frequently corrected the over-emphasis caused by his polemics."

Incidentally, there is some encouragement here for preachers who have an uneasy feeling that the pull is gone from the pulpit. Luther assigned great importance to the spoken word. He loved to emphasize that the ministry of Jesus was the ministry of the oral word. Christ did not write anything; but he spoke and preached.

continually. And "when a minister is privileged to preach the Word of God, he is doing the same work for which Christ was ordained."

J. WALLACE HAMILTON

Pasadena Community Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

**The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance.** By WILLIAM R. HUTCHISON. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. xvii-240 pp. \$4.50.

This book, which was awarded the Brewer Prize by the American Society of Church History, is a study of the transcendentalists' effort to reform the Unitarian Church during the New England Renaissance. The author's avowed purpose is "to find out what members of the Concord group did and said as Christian ministers, and also to re-assess the traditional account of the controversy in which they became involved."

It is obvious that Dr. Hutchison does not give us *all* that he found the transcendentalist ministers doing and saying; nor does he take a critical approach to their thoughts and actions. The question that arises is, What implicit norm is being used to shape the material? Apparently it is the author's concept of "a liberal attitude" which means to honor or at least take account of all serious commitments. Seemingly this can be done in two ways. One can stand back from the multiplicity of concerns, honoring all by excluding none, or one can attempt to embrace all divergent commitments in a concern which does justice to the essential meaning of each without holding up any particular position as final, other than the concern to do just this. The latter position incorporates the liberal's detachment without making detachment itself a finality.

The deficiencies in this somewhat painstakingly documental account stem from the adherence to the first of these two approaches, resulting in a rather insightless historicism which expects facts to speak for themselves.

Otherwise the book is intelligently written and organized. It makes available in very readable form a large amount of archival material, has an excellent bibliography, and serves to correct some one-sided assessments of personalities and issues.

J. CLAYTON FEAVER

Kingfisher College Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

**From Ur to Nazareth: An Economic Inquiry Into the Religious and Political History of Israel.** By FRANCIS NEILSON. New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1959. x-461 pp. \$6.00.

Despite the author's promise to use the term "economic" in the fundamental sense of man as a "land animal," the contents of this volume range over a much broader terrain than the subtitle prepares the reader to travel. But the writer warns him in advance of the circuitous journey in store for him. "I may sometimes wander from the beaten path and roam down lanes into fields of thought and speculation that seem only remotely connected with the principal narrative." This sentence contains one of the few understatements in the 463 pages of this volume.

This reviewer lauds the author's attempt to trace "in sequence the (economic) causes that brought about the wars that ended with the dispersion and captivity of the Israelites by the Assyrians and the people of Judah by the Babylonians." The

need for a definitive book of this sort could scarcely have been questioned. Nor can it yet.

But this criticism aside, I have been alternately delighted and discouraged by this work: delighted, on the one hand, that a layman of such stature could be moved to devote so much time and concern to the study of the Scriptures; discouraged, on the other, that a man of such obvious talent and background could quote so many eminent theologians and biblical scholars with such a profound misunderstanding of the deeper implications of their findings.

A few illustrations from this work of the dangers of too much seemingly random reading might be in order at this point. Though he laments the tenacity with which "so many people still cling to the old mythologies" of the Bible, he anticipates that "the matter of Noah's dwelling place, before and after he left the ark, will be settled in the course of time." Though he recognizes a considerable theological influence in the shaping of the Genesis narratives, he expresses consternation at the absence of any mention of dogs in the account of Abraham's journeys as a shepherd. After saying, "no one in Galilee or Judea thought of a Christ during the lifetime of the prophet of Nazareth," he quotes at length from a book in which Joseph Klausner, the author, describes Galilee in Jesus' time as a seething cauldron of messianic disturbances. Though he urges the use of Bultmann's reminder that "Christian faith did not exist until there was a Christian *kerygma*" in our approach to the Gospels and Acts, he calls for the separation in the Gospels of historical events from the portions of a "Pauline or mystical character"; identifies Jesus as the framer of a practical philosophy of simple justice for the individual; differentiates between "what is historic and what is Pauline"; and so on.

Two types of readers, those who delight in autobiographies and those who have a special interest in theological communication across professional lines, should derive peculiar benefit from the perusal of this work. The latter readers will be moved by it to a new awareness of the urgency—and the impossibility—of their task.

EVERETT TILSON

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**The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary.** By EMIL BRUNNER. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. 168 pp. \$3.50.

Romans is the most important of Paul's letters and the most important Christian theological treatise in existence. Within the compass of a brief 130 pages, Professor Brunner presents admirably the closely reasoned structure and sweep of Pauline thought. Paul, on the basis of his own experience, describes two ways: the Way of the Law, leading into a blind alley, and the Way of Faith, leading to the goal of God's will for man, as accepted though unacceptable.

Chapters 1-11 describe the changes that have taken place in men's lives through God's saving action, setting man's will in motion, giving it new direction and strength. This is the dogmatic, the theoretical section. That Paul should employ familiar Jewish thought forms, and deal seriously with the relation of Israel to the gospel, and the problem of their rejection of the gospel, since Jesus came in the first instance to the Jews, is not surprising. This section may not seem of great interest or importance to the Christian reader, but it was of supreme importance to Paul and the early Church.

The framework, however, does not destroy the universal implications and appli-

cations of the gospel, as the deeply personal sections of the first part of Romans make clear. Brunner is both a careful exegete and an extraordinarily helpful and original commentator. The preaching values of the Book of Romans are everywhere brought out. The concluding five chapters of Romans describe the life of the Christians. Here is powerful exposition, in most practical terms, of what it means to be a Christian, to have faith, to live by the Spirit. The Christian has a twofold relationship: toward God, that of faith; and toward man, that of love.

A unique feature of the book is an extended appendix in which Dr. Brunner discusses some fifteen leading ideas in the teaching of Paul, as elucidated not only in Romans but in Paul's other writings. This appendix is a most valuable part of the book.

Brunner's Commentary is an important addition to any minister's and theologian's library. It can also be read with profit by an interested and intelligent layman.

ALBERT J. PENNER

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**God's Image and Man's Imagination.** By ERDMAN HARRIS. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959. 256 pp. \$3.50.

Princeton, Columbia, Union Theological Seminary, Edinburgh, and Oxford put their mark on the mind of Erdman Harris. He is richly furnished mentally. He has read in the widest possible fashion. He has submitted the materials of his study to the closest and most thorough analysis.

In this volume he confronts the fact that man's understanding even of God comes through the use of the most varied images worked upon by his own searching imagination. He finds these materials in the utterances of theism, the documents of the Bible, the Christian tradition, and even in cults and sects. In all this, living experience is moving masterfully from one glowing symbol to another. There is a forward movement in this experience of living images. Some of them prove unworthy and must be cast away. Some belong to the actual advance of dependable apprehension. Gradually there comes to be a corpus of dynamic symbols which on the human side is man's use of his creative imagination and on God's side is revelation. We meet truth in living imagination. It expresses itself in vital images. These are captured and set to work by man's own mind. The wealth of material examined by the author, and the continual flashes of insight, make this a notable book.

The reader can make the material the basis of large adventures of understanding of his own. The growing life of the Christian makes the selection more critical and more mature. Here we leave the realm of formal logic for the images which express the very vitalities of Christian faith and life. This book of Erdman Harris deserves a second reading.

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

New York City. Formerly Dean of Drew Theological Seminary, Madison,  
New Jersey.

**Faith and Love.** By ALEXANDER ALAN STEINBACH. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959. 114 pp. \$3.00.

This compact book of essays is not merely another of those Pollyanna products of good cheer with which the market is sated. It is an encyclopedia of brilliant every-

day philosophy woven into words of pearls. Dr. Steinbach speaks from the heart and with a poet's divine gift of beautiful phrase and lucid presentation. Even the free-thinker would be electrified with the Rabbi's vivid articulation, if nothing else. But there is common sense, vision, perception, and a deep conviction that Providence governs all of life's creatures.

Dr. Steinbach maintains there is no such thing as God's silence: "He speaks to every individual attuned to His revelations. Whatever silence exists is in man himself. It stems from his failure to subordinate his will to the Divine will and to become familiar with a spiritual vocabulary God speaks. His emptiness is unfilled because he has nothing to give to God. Let him utter prayers that cry out of his spirit, and a Divine reply will come to him like a benediction shining through the gloom of his heartache."

Dr. Alexander Alan Steinbach has written several books of poetry and prose which reflect his humanitarian outlook and religious dedication. He has just completed twenty-five years of devoted and distinguished service at the Temple Ahavath Sholom, the largest Reform congregation in the borough of Brooklyn; he is President of the New York Board of Rabbis and of the Jewish Book Council of America.

Faith and Love is an anthology born out of rich and seasoned experience in human relations. It convinces the reader that there is a sense of values still retrievable in this troubled world.

LILLIAN GOLDBERG

1010 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York.

**The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln.**

By WILLIAM J. WOLF. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959. 216 pp.  
\$3.95.

The question of the religion of Lincoln has been bandied about for almost a century. It is about time someone applied textual and historical criticism to the matter. Just such a one is William J. Wolf of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. Being an accomplished theologian, Dr. Wolf knows the right questions to ask. He finds Lincoln one of America's greatest theologians who, like the prophets of Israel, criticized the events of the day from the perspective of the God who is concerned for history and reveals his will within it.

Lincoln has been baptized, appropriated, and excommunicated after the fact by special interests long enough. In the matter of religion Dr. Wolf's book now establishes the truth of this summary paragraph: ". . . For Lincoln, God was not a 'cosmic blur,' nor the parsons' 'stock in trade,' nor the politicians' benediction over spread-eagle oratory. God was ultimate yet personal reality, and he made himself accessible to one who sought him out. For Lincoln, God was the final court of appeal when he was uncertain about the moral aspects of a question. God's guidance was sought when Lincoln wanted to pass through the tides of political expediency to stand on bedrock."

In a day when we become excited about a candidate's faith, when piety on the Potomac is part of political crusades, and civil rights are still before us in moral terms, it is exciting to read in *The Almost Chosen People* how these matters were understood by a really mature mind.

JOHN O. MELLIN

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**Point of Glad Return.** By LANCE WEBB. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 224 pp. \$3.50.

**When Trouble Comes.** By JAMES E. SELLERS. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 128 pp. \$2.00.

**Sermon Outlines From Sermon Masters.** By IAN MACPHERSON. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960. 224 pp. \$2.50.

**The Human Problems of the Minister.** By DANIEL D. WALKER. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960. 203 pp. \$3.95.

1. Touch Lance Webb's *Point of Glad Return* anywhere and it bleeds—your blood. You will find that his "lance" has cut through the "web" of your loneliness, boredom, and guilt, but you will also know the living spirit of Christ which pulses through Part I. Part II examines our ambition, laughter, and health, reveals our true natures with vital personal and scriptural illustrations, and guides to Christ-centered living, where true success is rewarded by the Master's praise: "Well done, good and faithful servant." "Beware of little deaths," Webb quotes Sandberg in Part III, and gives help toward larger living and growing through pain, sorrow, or death until, like the prodigal son, we find God through Christ at the "point of glad return."

2. Aimed at the questions of evil, sin, and suffering, *When Trouble Comes* has some effective answers and gives assurance that God is in control of the universe. We do not find simple solutions, for man is "not let off the hook" of trouble and suffering, but we are helped to find our way through faith to service. This straight-to-the-point discussion will help parishioners to triumph over troubles. Preachers will find help not only in the clear thinking but also in the wealth of newspaper-fresh illustrations. What can be learned from a study of Dr. Sellers' skillful use of up-to-the-minute press items is alone worth a preacher's hard-earned two dollars.

3. Students of sermons will be interested in this collection of sermon blueprints by many of the past and present preachers. These "skeletons" will help in a clinical approach to sermon construction. Some of our outlines, Macpherson points out, "are like the broom—bare collocations of loosely connected ideas." We must work to make them "like the tree . . . with vigorous life." Working over your own outlines, with these models as a guide, may bring new vitality to the bare bones. An ideal outline will be, as MacPherson writes in his introduction, "scriptural, vital, integral, original, logical, symmetrical, pictorial, practical."

4. This last book so penetrates the minister's predicament, that I find myself hesitating to underline some pertinent passages because they expose too much of the truth. Here are the human problems of the minister—hidden sins, pretensions, swollen schedules, pride, guilt. "Only God's mercy is wider than our guilt," writes Walker. The answers are demanding and challenging. Typical is this word to the "administrator" from Paul: "Christ did not send me to see how many I could baptize, but to proclaim the gospel" (Phillips). Dr. Walker urges ministers not to conform but to "let our ministry be different from what anyone else has worked out . . . by doing what God wants us to do."

WILFRED HANSEN

Trinity Methodist Church, New Britain, Connecticut.

**What Manner of Love.** By GEORGE F. TITTMANN. New York: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1959. 183 pp. \$3.75.

**In His Likeness.** By G. MCLEOD BRYAN. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1959. 192 pp. \$3.00.

1. Taking his title from 1 John 3:1, this new author seeks to give us a twentieth-century re-experiencing of "the Bible as the Love Story of God" (to use his subtitle). Over a half dozen life-situation parables pepper the chapters. These include a puppeteer who won't take the chance to give life to his creatures, a host of angels commenting on the risk of entrusting the mission to twelve humans, a paraphrase of the Ten Commandments, and Johnny, his pea-shooter, and the fact that he sat by the chief of police at dinner.

How refreshing to have this creative attempt in theology. The vocabulary reflects the enthusiasm and spontaneity of this energetic, thoughtful parish minister. Many a phrase, subtitle, and idea will spark a lay or clerical reader. Unimaginative "orthodox" theologians beware!

2. In *In His Likeness*, the former Associate Professor of Christian Social Ethics of Wake Forest College gives us forty selections on the Imitation of Christ, ranging from Bonhoeffer and Evelyn Underhill, through Kierkegaard, Woolman, Jeremy Taylor, Meister Eckhart, back to the early fathers. In the Introduction H. Richard Niebuhr rejoices that "Christ brings so varied a company of disciples together."

Many a lay reader and perhaps a cleric or two will be grateful for the brief but helpful introductions with which the author guides the journey. This has the marks of a labor of love shared in joy and gratitude. The "Imitation" theme is a broad umbrella as used in this anthology. Highly recommended for daily devotional reading and plenty of material for leaders of group devotionals.

BAYARD S. CLARK

St. Bartholomew's Church, Nashville, Tennessee.

**Christian Ethics and the Dilemmas of Foreign Policy.** By KENNETH W. THOMPSON. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1959. ix-148 pp. \$3.50.

Secretary of State Christian Herter recently has indicated the almost insurmountable problems of a diplomat representing a Western democracy today. The past few years have brought demands for a great moral crusade, for foreign policy based firmly on Christian ethics. Much too little, though, has been written about ethics within the realities of the international scene.

Dr. Kenneth W. Thompson, Associate Director of Social Science of the Rockefeller Foundation, a member of the Editorial Board of *International Organization* and *Christianity and Crisis*, is an able political scientist who has a deep interest in the relationship of Christian ethics and foreign policy. His book has been published at Duke under the Lilly Endowment Research Program in Christianity and Politics. A perceptive analysis of the crucial problems of this day, this book is well worth the careful study of ministers and laymen alike.

Morality is considered within the framework of the practical realm of urgent specific problems of international relations. In discussing moral imperatives he contrasts effectively the thinking of Judge Charles de Visscher, Professor Reinhold Nie-

buhr, and Sir Winston Churchill. Both national self-righteousness and the other extreme of denial of ethic are questioned.

Our obvious confusion following the U-2 incident and the disastrous results of the Paris Summit Conference gives the author's discussion of absolute principles and personal diplomacy unique timeliness. He selects three dilemmas of contemporary foreign policy for consideration: armaments, colonialism, and diplomacy. As the military strength of a nation is evidence of its foreign policy, the dilemma of reliance on conventional weapons or weapons of annihilation is clearly drawn. Are we to rest our policy of mutual security with our allies or to support wholeheartedly the development of young independent states? He shares the concern of us all in the lessening influence of Western thought among the newer nations and our own lack of sure-footed self-confidence in dealing with international situations.

His thoughtful chapter, "Judaean-Christian Realism: The Cold War and the Search for Relevant Norms," is stimulating indeed. He relates the thinking of Professors Geoffrey Barraclough and Herbert Butterfield, and that of two able American diplomats, Dean Acheson and George F. Kennan, with that of St. Paul. The author's abrupt dismissal of some recent movements as well as his outline of relevant norms will disturb some. He concludes with a call for "cosmic humility rather than self-conscious righteousness."

This book is a scholarly and effective introduction and definition of mankind's perhaps most critical problem of the latter half of this century. Dr. Thompson has made a real contribution to thinking on this problem. It is hoped that he will expand upon the outline of this study.

ROBERT F. OXNAM.

President, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York.

**William Nast, Patriarch of German Methodism.** By CARL WITTK. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1960. 256 pp. \$4.95.

American church history will never be neat and final—at least not *as* neat and final as some national church histories—because of the many cultures and nationalities that have contributed to the American story. The Germans who came to America were often in revolt against religion and certainly against state-related religion. Methodism began to appeal to the Germans in America in the late 1700's. By the mid-1800's there were many German Methodists with German language services and vigorous leadership. One of the outstanding characters in this growing development was William Nast.

Dr. Wittke has given an interesting picture of this patriarch, whose life was not without faults. Nast's intellectual and spiritual heritage was rugged, and his ministry in establishing the work of Methodism back in Germany needed such fortification. Good reading—exciting in many places—this book will find an important place in American church history.

To sound one negative note, it must be regretted that a more careful check of American Methodist history was not made. Dr. Wittke locates the Christmas Conference in New York, rather than in Baltimore; he has camp meetings beginning before they actually did; and a few slips in Methodist terminology also show. But despite these errors, one has confidence in Nast and the story about how he came to be what he was.

E. S. B.

**The Parables: Sermons on the Stories Jesus Told.** By GERALD KENNEDY. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960. 213 pp. \$3.50.

One views a book like this with mixed emotions. On the one hand, a book of this type is long overdue from Gerald Kennedy, for he is truly a parable preacher; on the other hand, think how many times we will be hearing these sermons from so many different people! Actually the book will reach its greatest service as it gets used, however, for too many preachers have forgotten how to preach the way Jesus preached. With twenty-four sermons based on the Parables of Jesus, Bishop Kennedy has divided them into six thematic sections: God is a Father; the human situation; the contest of life; the responsibility of persons; the achievement of character; and the Kingdom of God.

It is not to imply that his previous books lack appreciation of the mystical experience of Christian truth, when I say that running through this volume one senses a stronger appreciation of the mystical. Take a sentence like "To me it is remarkable the way the teachings of the Gospel prove to be more basic as our life becomes more complicated." Here is an evidence of insight that is typical throughout the twenty-four sermons. Combined with arresting insights there is the prophetic motif which makes these sermons embarrassingly personal and direct. It is what some of us "old liberals" would call applied religion.

E. S. B.

Paul G. Macy has written an expert and exciting history of the World Council of Churches for laymen: *If It Be of God*, Bethany Press, \$4.00. This includes not merely the various Assemblies, their debates and reports, but the human background in the lives of various leaders, the work of the "Christian underground" under totalitarian regimes, the work for refugees, etc. It is the story (says H. S. Leiper in his foreword) of "one of the few hopeful things now going on in our divided world."

Westminster sends us two significant books in the field of Christian education: first, *Children in the Church*, by Iris V. Cully (\$3.75), who is deeply concerned with continuing developments in both theology and psychology, and who maintains a balance between respect for the child as a person related to God as Person, and the child's relation to the corporate fellowship. The book abounds in practical application. The other book is *Train Up a Child*, by William Barclay (\$4.50), subtitled "Educational Ideals in the Ancient World." This well-known and readable New Testament expositor here examines the methods and ideals of elementary education that prevailed in four cultures: the Jewish, the Spartan, the Athenian, and the Roman—and inquires into the degree of their influence on the early church. His last two chapters deal with the Christian attitude toward pagan culture and the child in the early church.

Westminster Press has also sent us *Retarded Children: God's Children*, by Sigurd Petersen (\$3.00). The author is psychiatric chaplain at Parsons State Hospital and Training Center, Parsons, Kansas, and on this twenty-four acre estate he cares for more than 600 retarded children, training them as far as their capacities allow. He finds that nearly all of them are capable of religious awareness; he gives many case histories, and offers suggestions to parents and local churches.

Harper has now published in this country the fascinating book by the Swiss doctor, Paul Tournier, *A Doctor's Casebook in the Light of the Bible* (reviewed Winter, 1955-56, now \$3.50), and describes it as "a companion to *The Meaning of Persons*"

(reviewed Autumn, 1958). Harper also sends us *Spiritual Therapy*, by Richard R. Young and Albert L. Meiburg (\$3.50). The authors are two pastors who carry on their ministry of healing in one of the nation's most modern hospitals, the North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. They subtitle the book "How the Physician, Psychiatrist, and Minister Collaborate in Healing." Clarence Hall had an article on their work in *The Reader's Digest*, September, 1959, and this is included here in condensed form as introduction. With a wealth of case histories, the authors make clear the varieties of approach required specifically by different conditions or diseases: heart disease, asthma, peptic ulcer, anxiety and conversion reaction, childbirth, etc. The final chapter treats "The General Hospital as a Setting for Spiritual Therapy."

Ralph Felton of Drew has written a useful book, *The Pulpit and the Plow* (Friendship Press, paper \$1.75, cloth \$2.95). He shows how the church today has to be actively involved in all the practical problems of rural communities, both at home and abroad; and what church organizations and agricultural missionaries and preacher-farmers are doing to meet them. "He places the rural mission within the ecumenical framework."

*What It Means to Be a Christian*, by Robert W. Youngs, a Presbyterian minister (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, \$3.50), is a book "written for people who have lost their taste for insipid Christianity." He points to the dynamic qualities of first-century Christianity, and the cardinal beliefs which enabled them to survive a dying culture and contribute to a new one life's higher values: Jesus as Christ, Saviour, the Resurrection; and the Holy Spirit. He continues with "The Salvation of a Christian," "The Life of a Christian," "The Church of a Christian."

Wm. B. Eerdmans (Grand Rapids) has announced a completely new translation of Calvin's Commentaries on the New Testament, under the general editorship of T. F. and D. W. Torrance. The first volume of this series to appear is *The Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-10*, translated by T. H. L. Parker; eleven more volumes will follow. John T. McNeill and other authorities find these translations of outstanding merit.

T. & T. Clark in Edinburgh continue to publish Karl Barth's complete works in English, under the editorship of G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. The latest volume to reach us is *The Doctrine of Creation*, being Volume III, 2, of the *Church Dogmatics*. More specifically, the entire book is Chapter 10 of that volume, dealing with "The Creature." The editors say this "should finally destroy the charge that Karl Barth has nothing to say about man . . . he has in fact given us the most massive account of the doctrine of man in our times."

University Books Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, is bringing out an unusual series of large volumes in the field of history of religion. We have received *The Book of the Dead*, a translation into English of the Papyrus of Ani, by E. A. Wallis Budge, late keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum (\$12.50), and *The Holy Kabbalah*, by the nineteenth-century scholar of occultism, A. E. Waite. Kenneth Rexroth says in his introduction to the latter that "no other Gentile writer on Kabbalism can even remotely be compared to him, and no modern Jewish writers are any better."

E. H. L.





